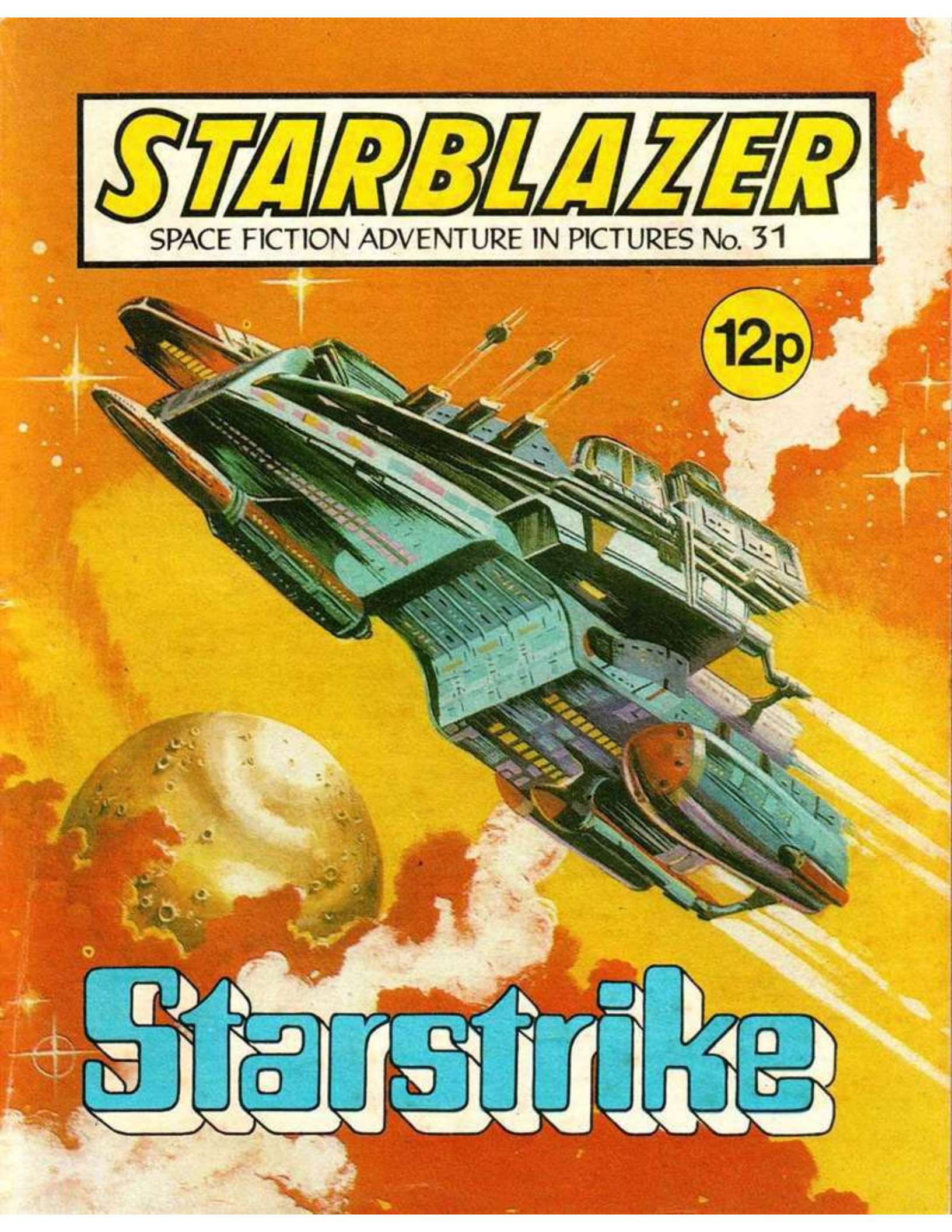
STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 31

12p



Starstrike

STARBLAZER

EARTH'S EXPANSION INTO THE GALAXY TRIGGERED OFF BITTER RIVALRIES AND JEALOUSIES WITH OTHER WORLDS. A COSMIC BATTLEFLEET PATROLLED DEEP SPACE CONSTANTLY— ALWAYS AT THE READY TO QUELL ANY OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE. ONE OF EARTH'S MAIN PEACEKEEPING BASES WAS LUNAR 1 . . . ON EARTH'S MOON, AND IT WAS THE FIRST BASE TO SUFFER A STARSTRIKE.

STARSTRIKE

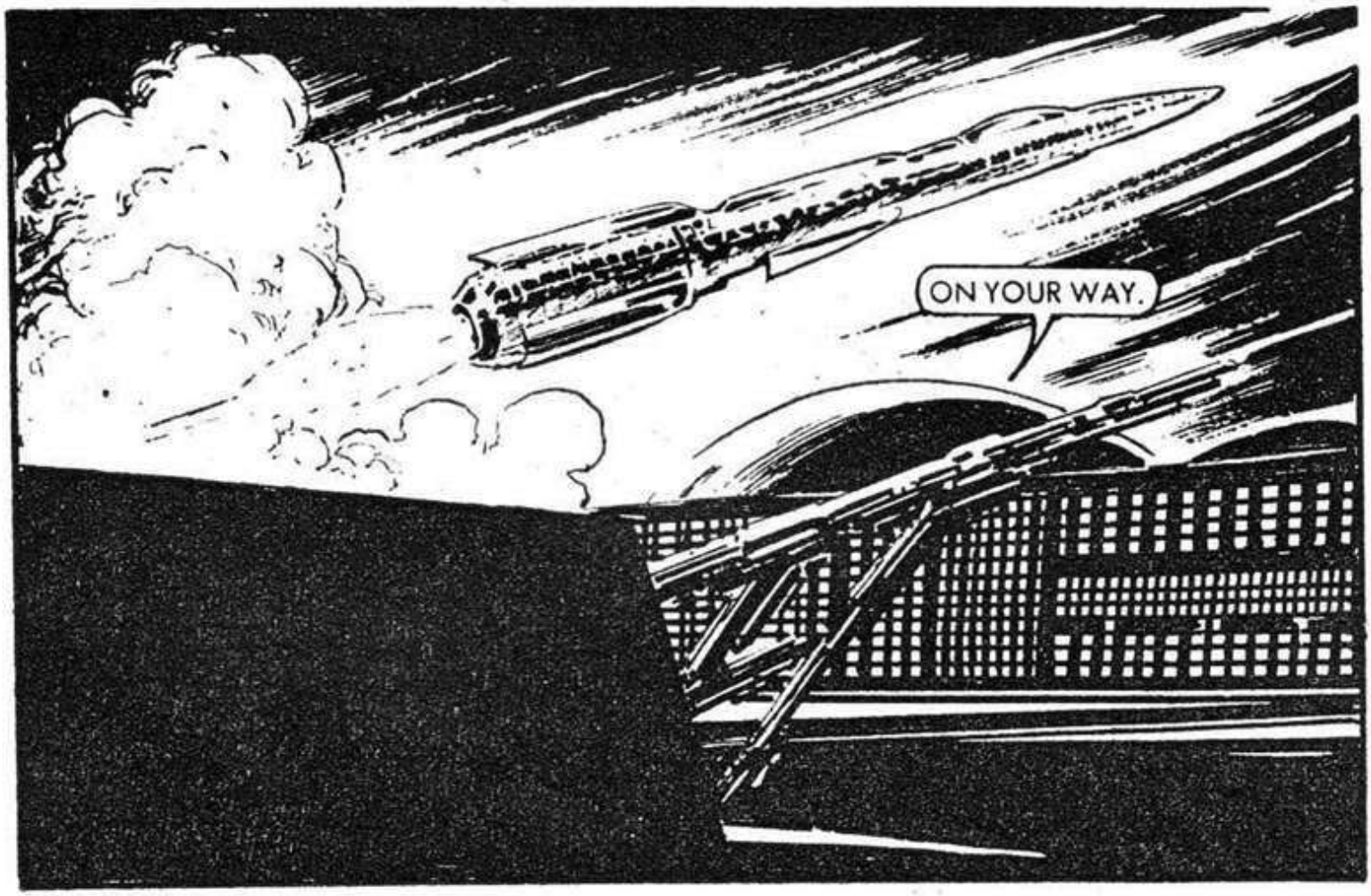
ALTHOUGH THE FRONTIERS OF GALACTIC EXPLORATION WERE SITUATED LIGHT YEARS AWAY, MAN STILL EXPLORED THE OLD MOON. GEOLOGIST FRANK KIRBY WAS CHECKING INSTRUMENTS WHEN HE SPOTTED AN INTENSE FLASH OF ENERGY.
WHAT WAS THAT?

THE LONE GEOLOGIST WENT TO INVESTIGATE.

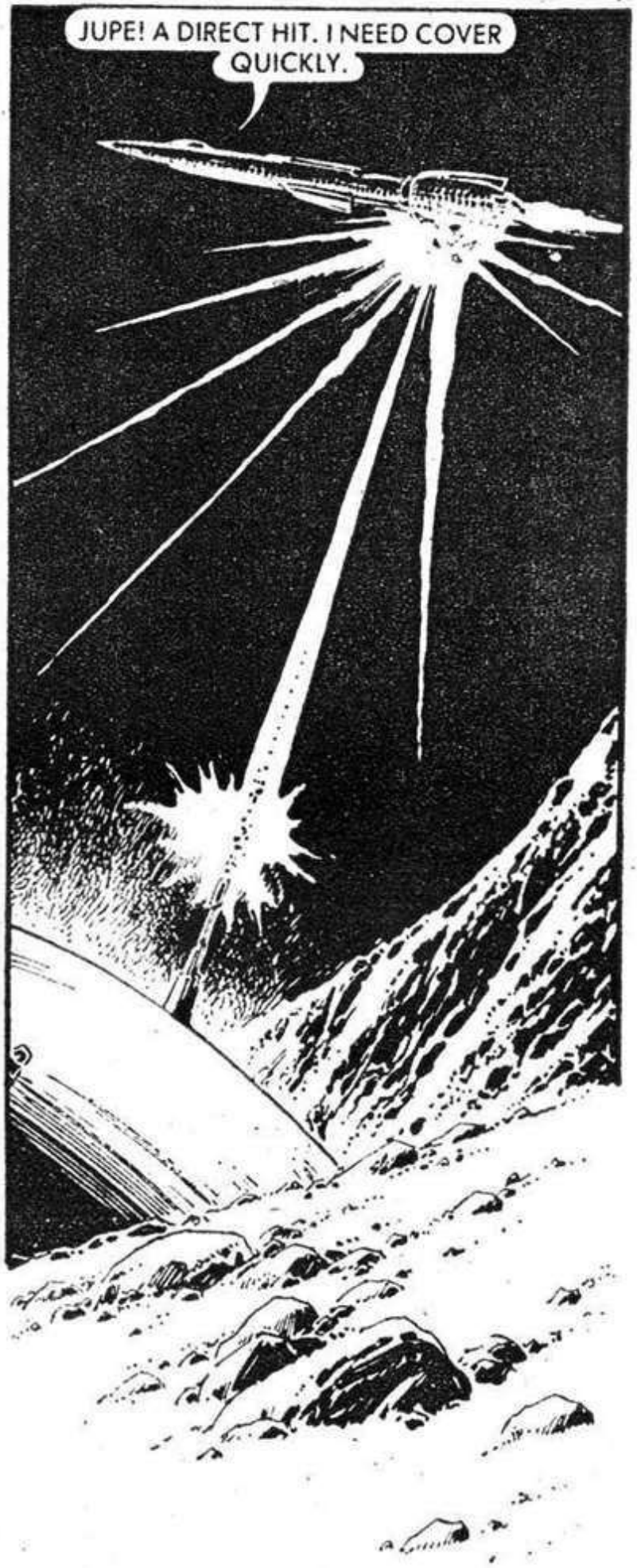
THAT THING IS NOT A METEOR. IT'S WORTH A CLOSE INSPECTION.

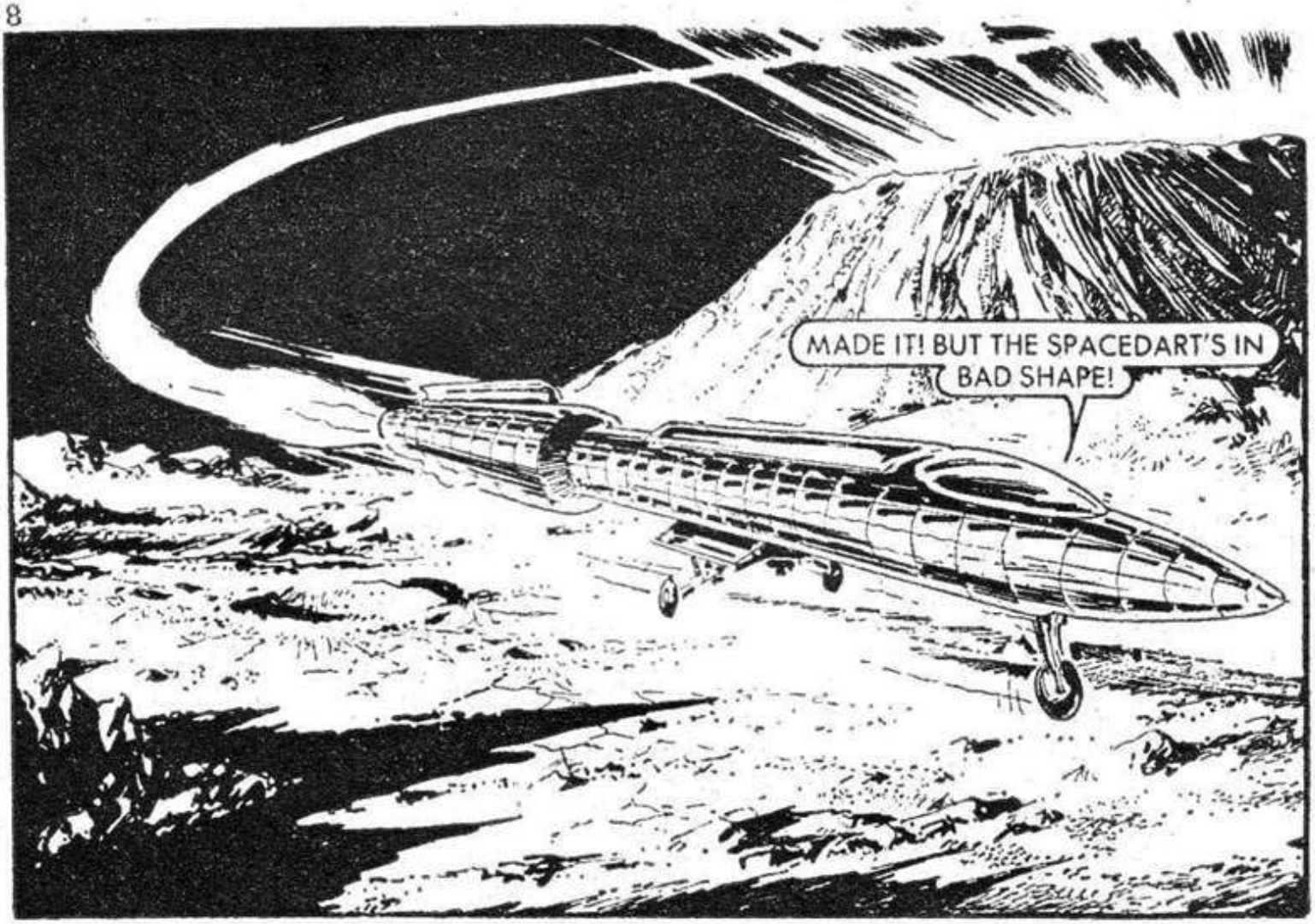
THE GALACTIC PATROL HAD A SMALL GARRISON AT LUNAR CITY.
DISTRESS CALL FROM 15N9E! DUTY PATROLMAN TO REPORT TO LAUNCH PAD AT ONCE.

THE DUTY PATROLMAN WAS READY AND WAITING.



MARTIN TO CONTROL. THERE'S SOMETHING REALLY WEIRD OUT HERE!

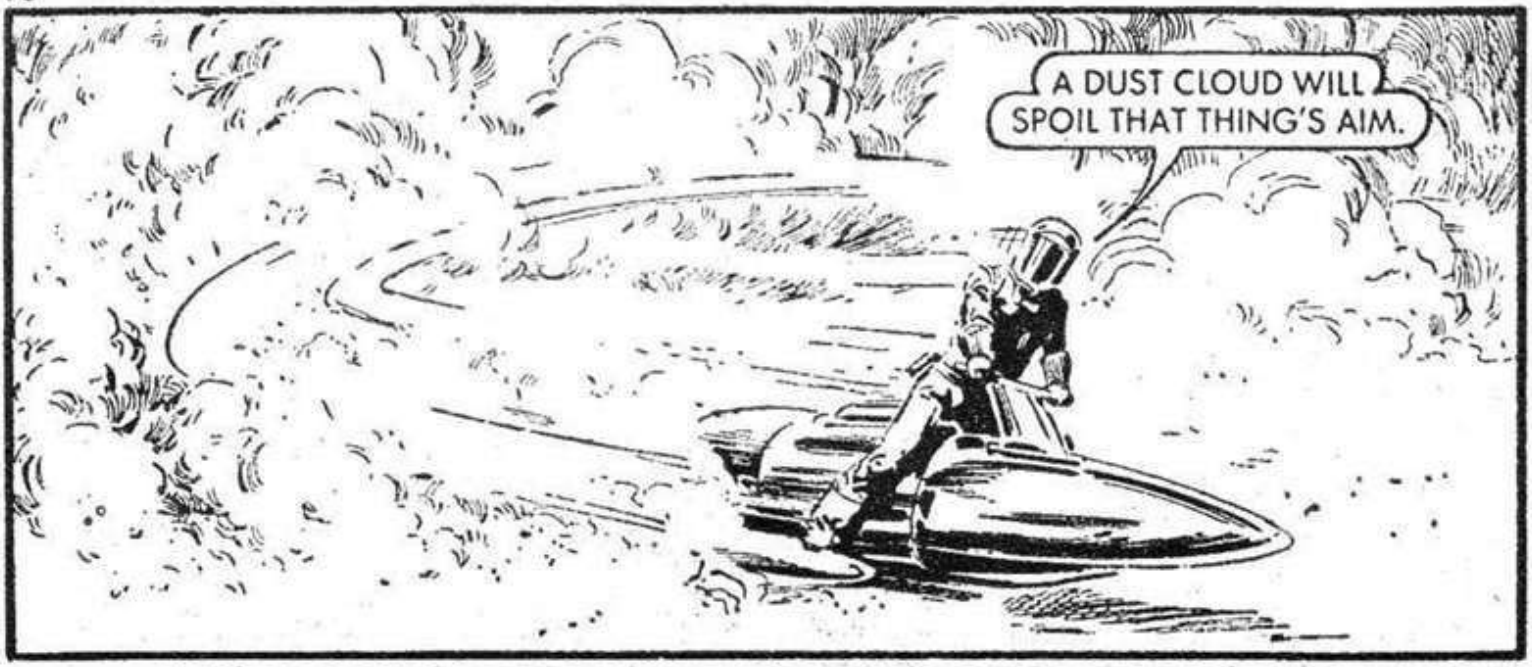

JUPE! A DIRECT HIT. I NEED COVER QUICKLY.

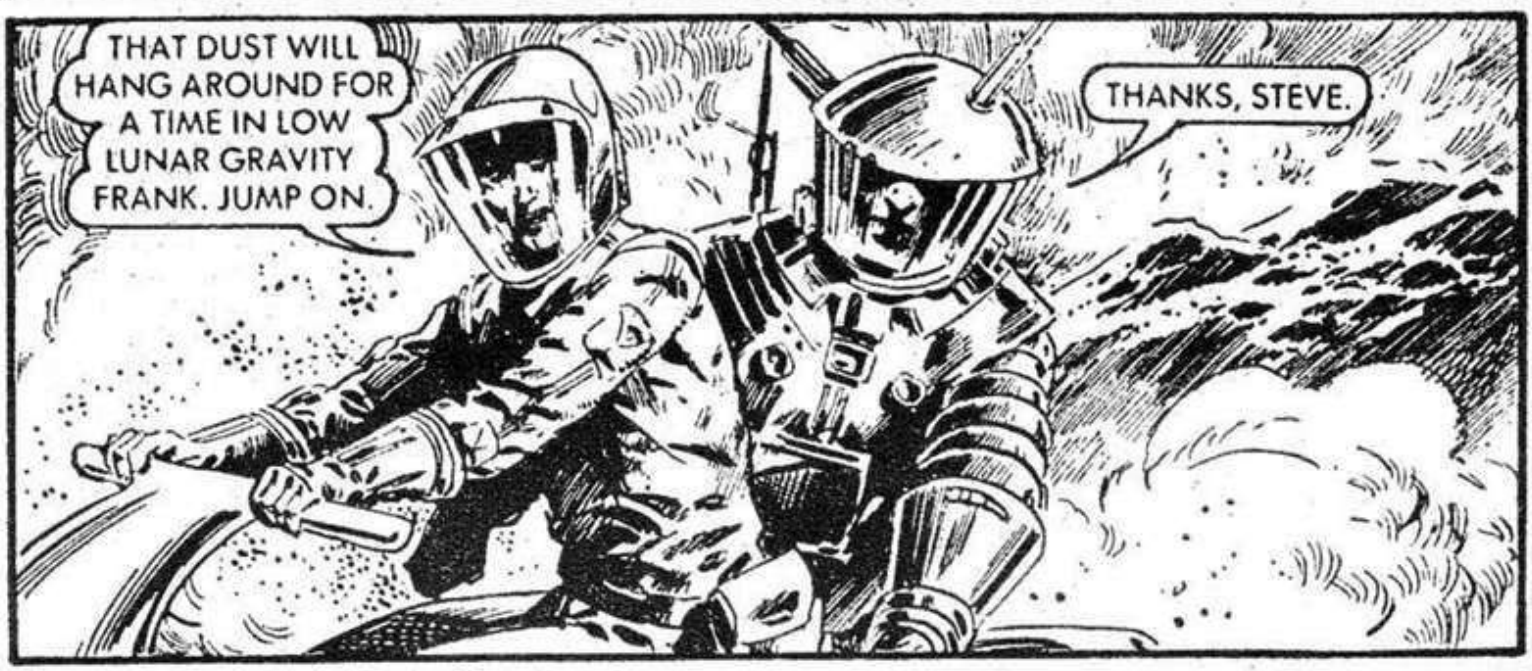

MADE IT! BUT THE SPACEDART'S IN BAD SHAPE!

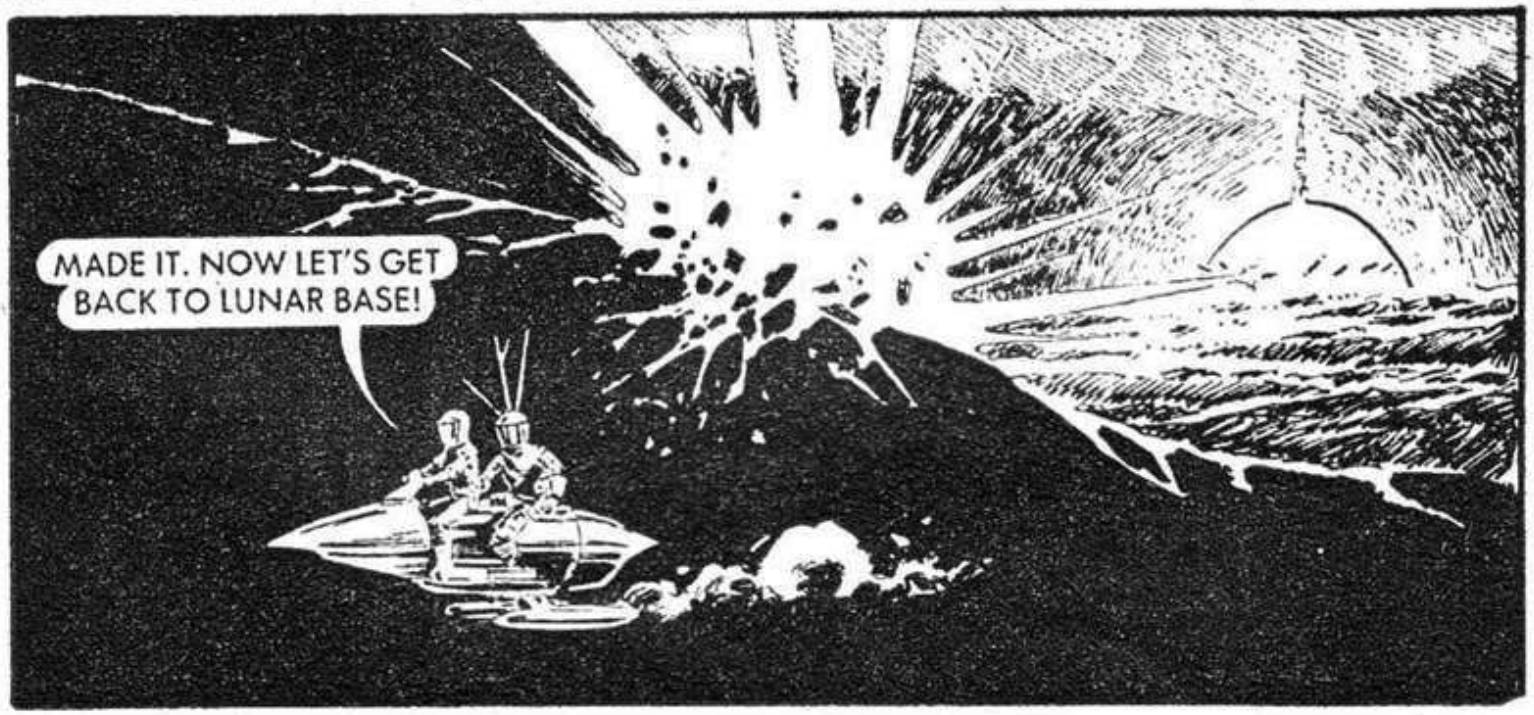
STEVE UNSHIPPED A MOONHOPPER FROM THE EQUIPMENT HOLD OF HIS SPACEDART.
ACCORDING TO THE DISTRESS CALL, THE GEOLOGIST IS TRAPPED INSIDE THE CRATER.

AS LONG AS I'M OUT OF SIGHT OF THAT THING, I'M SAFE. BUT HOW FAR WILL THIS VALLEY TAKE ME?
THERE'S THE GEOLOGIST. HOW CAN I GET TO HIM?

FULL SPEED AHEAD.


A DUST CLOUD WILL SPOIL THAT THING'S AIM.


THAT DUST WILL HANG AROUND FOR A TIME IN LOW LUNAR GRAVITY FRANK. JUMP ON.
THANKS, STEVE.

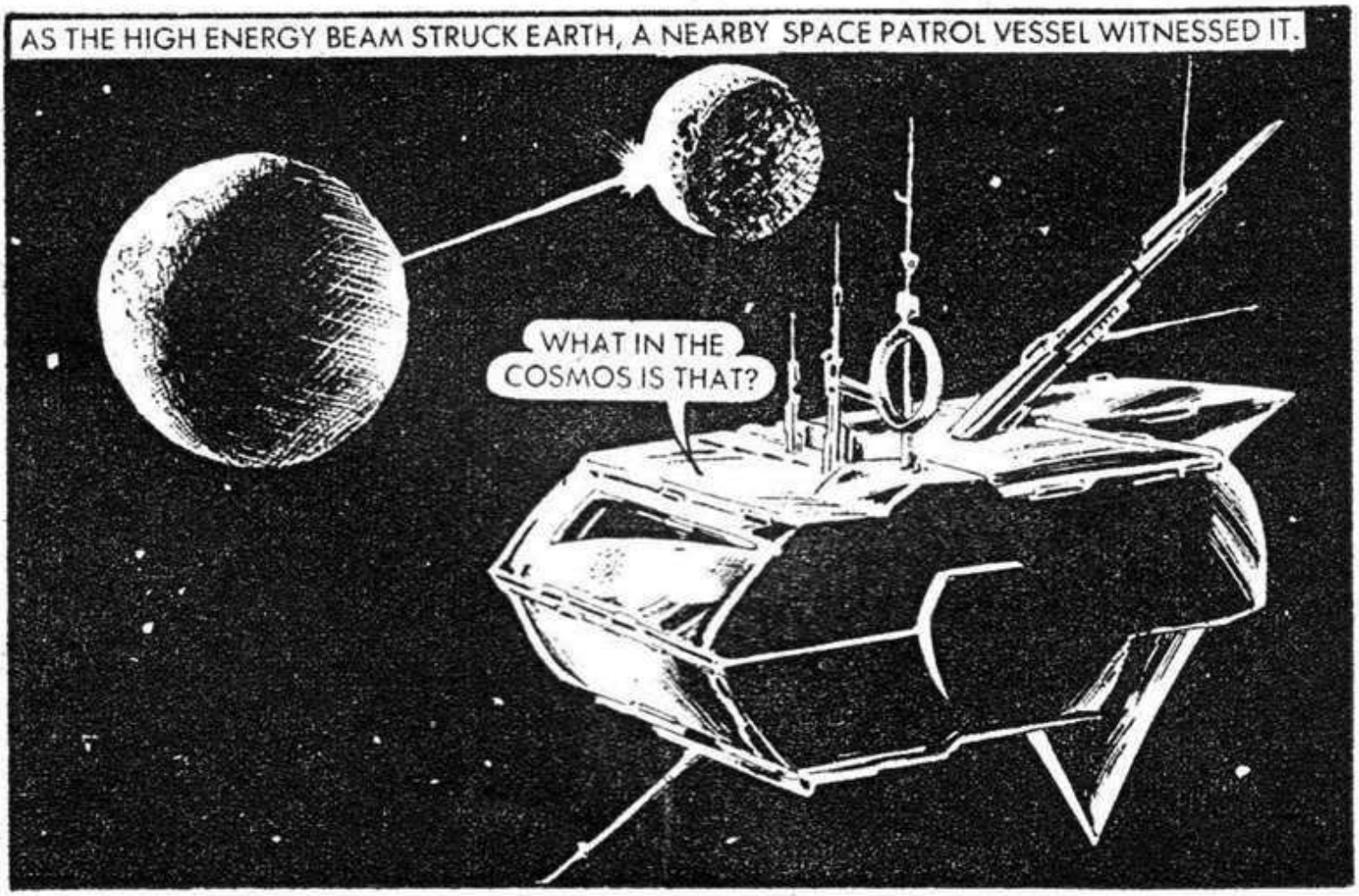

MADE IT. NOW LET'S GET BACK TO LUNAR BASE!

STEVE AND FRANK RETURNED TO LUNAR BASE.
THE NEXT PROBLEM IS TO DISCOVER WHAT THAT THING IS AND WHY IT IS HERE!

IMMEDIATELY UPON RETURN, STEVE REPORTED TO THE LUNAR BASE PATROL COMMANDER.
FASTEN YOUR COLLAR! THEN EXPLAIN HOW YOU GOT YOUR SPACEDART DAMAGED.
YES, SIR.

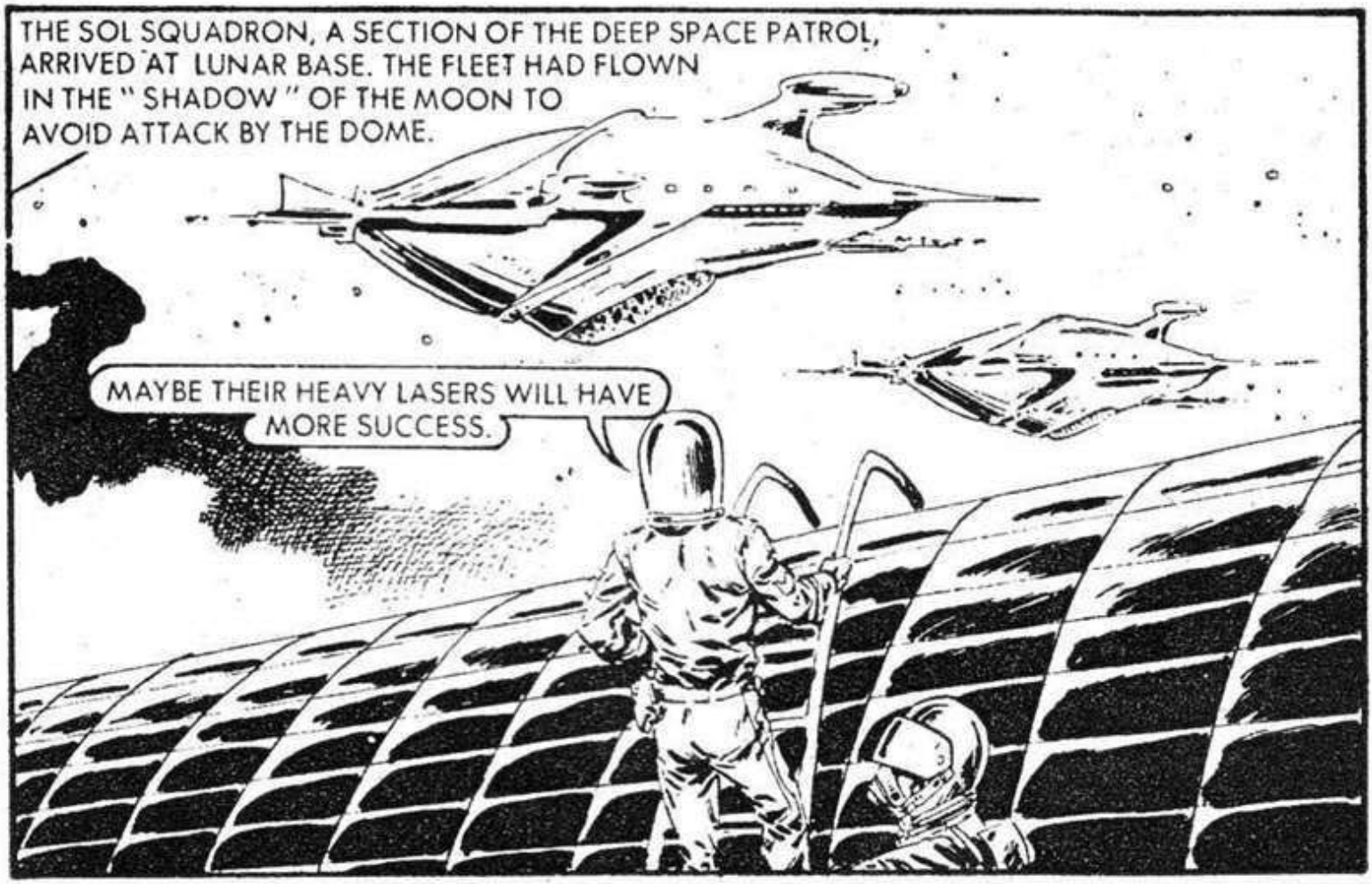
THERE'S A DOME, SIR, OF ALIEN DESIGN, THAT FIRES AT ANYTHING THAT MOVES . . . LOOK BEHIND YOU, SIR.

THEY'RE FIRING AT EARTH! WE NEED THE BATTLEFLEET HERE AS FAST AS POSSIBLE.
IT WAS A LITTLE ONE OF THOSE BEAMS THAT DID FOR MY SPACECRAFT, SIR.


AS THE HIGH ENERGY BEAM STRUCK EARTH, A NEARBY SPACE PATROL VESSEL WITNESSED IT.
WHAT IN THE COSMOS IS THAT?

ON EARTH A VAST AREA WAS DEVASTATED . . .
THE ENERGY BEAM STRUCK MANY MORE PLACES, LEAVING PEOPLE HOMELESS.
IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD!
WHY ISN'T THE GALACTIC PATROL DOING ANYTHING?

. . . BUT THE GALACTIC PATROL WAS DOING SOMETHING.
RETREAT TO BASE. THAT DOME'S TAKEN EVERYTHING WE'VE HANDED OUT.


THE SOL SQUADRON, A SECTION OF THE DEEP SPACE PATROL, ARRIVED AT LUNAR BASE. THE FLEET HAD FLOWN IN THE " SHADOW " OF THE MOON TO AVOID ATTACK BY THE DOME.
MAYBE THEIR HEAVY LASERS WILL HAVE MORE SUCCESS.

STEVE LEFT HIS SPACEDART AFTER MANY ABORTIVE ATTEMPTS TO BREACH THE DOME.

THE CHIEF WANTS TO SEE YOU IMMEDIATELY.

DO YOUR COLLAR! THE HIGH COMMAND WANT A FIRST HAND REPORT OF THE DOME FROM YOU.

YES, SIR!

YOU AND FRANK ARE THE ONLY ONES TO GET CLOSE TO THAT DOME. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

THE WEAKNESS OF THE DOME IS THAT IT NEEDS TO SEE TO FIRE. IF THE MOON HAD AN ATMOSPHERE WE COULD DEFEAT IT WITH A SMOKE SCREEN — BUT I THINK I KNOW A WAY TO GET IN CLOSE — EVEN IN VACUUM . . .

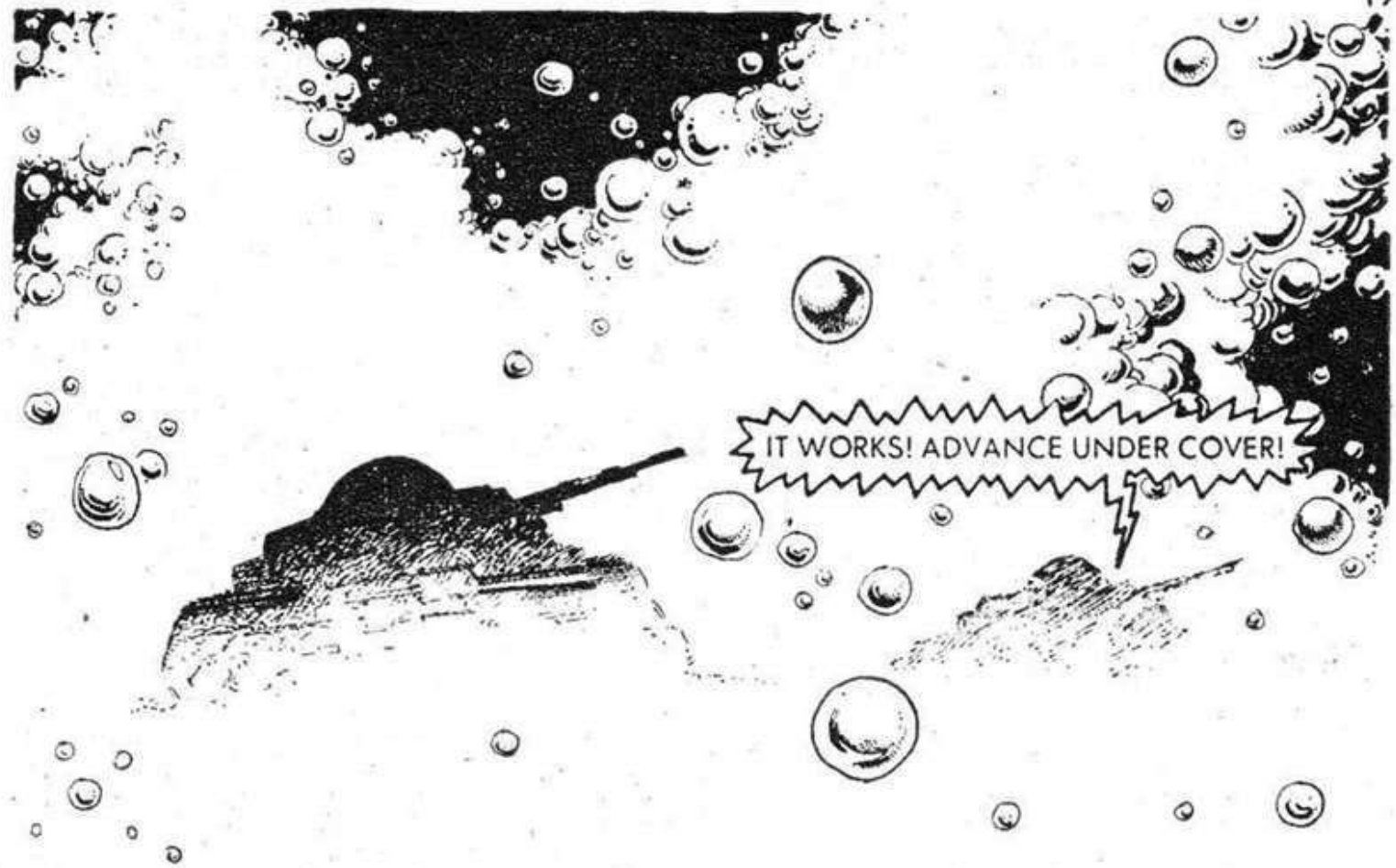
MARTIN'S IDEA IS ALL WE'VE GOT. GIVE HIM ALL THE MEN AND EQUIPMENT HE NEEDS FOR HIS PLAN.
IF YOU SAY SO, SIR.

STEVE AND HIS TASK FORCE HEADED FOR THE DOME.
MARTIN TO CONTROL. TASK FORCE NOW ENTERING THE DANGER ZONE.

THIS IS AS FAR AS WE DARE GO. I'LL GO ALONE FROM HERE.
GOOD LUCK, STEVE. WE'LL BE RIGHT BEHIND YOU.

I ONLY HOPE I'M RIGHT.

THE WEAPON WAS SIMPLY A REPAIR VEHICLE USED FOR PLUGGING AIR LEAKS IN THE SKIN OF LUNAR CITY. IT FIRED JETS OF FOAM SEALANT SPECIALLY DEVELOPED TO FLOAT IN VACUUM.
THIS SCREEN OF VACO-FOAM SHOULD STOP THEIR DESTRUCTION BEAMS FOCUSSING.


IT WORKS! ADVANCE UNDER COVER!

FULL SPEED AHEAD! I WANT FIRST CRACK.
KEEP BEHIND THE FOAM!

BUT THE WARNING WAS TOO LATE.
WE MUST BE NEARLY THERE. I CAN'T SEE THEM ANYMORE THAN THEY CAN SEE US.
CONTACT! IT'S ALL YOURS NOW SPACE-TROOPERS!
FIRE!

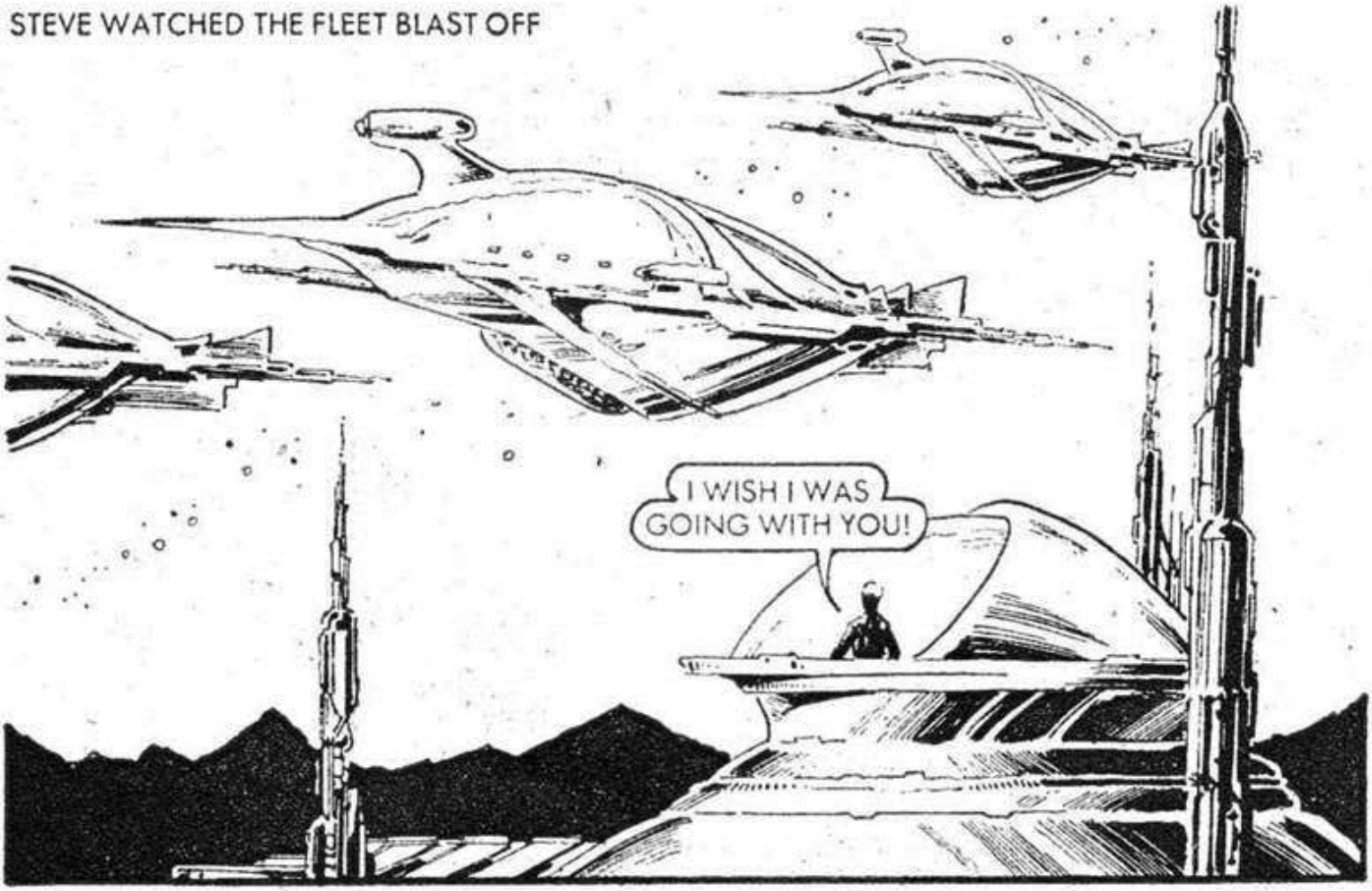
THE ALIEN CREW WERE UNABLE TO STOP THE ONSLAUGHT.
OUR DEFENCES ARE SHATTERED!
WE HAVE FAILED!

TAKE PRISONERS FOR QUESTIONING!

THE GLEEKS WERE A NOMADIC, BARBARIC RACE WHO ROAMED THE GALAXY KILLING AND PLUNDERING THE WEAK AND DEFENCELESS.

BACK AT LUNAR BASE, STEVE WAS SUMMONED TO THE COMMANDER'S OFFICE.
THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF WANTS YOUR REPORT. MAKE SURE YOUR COLLAR IS STRAIGHT.
YES, SIR.

WE OBTAINED A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION FROM OUR PRISONER. WE ARE SETTING OUT TO THE CATHAY NEBULA TO HALT THE GLEEK TASK FORCE.
GOOD HUNTING, SIR.


STEVE WATCHED THE FLEET BLAST OFF
I WISH I WAS GOING WITH YOU!

AS THE SOL SQUADRON TOOK OFF TO DEFEND EARTH AGAINST THE MAIN INVASION FORCE OF THE GLEEKS, STEVE WAS CALLED TO LUNAR OBSERVATORY.
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE INTERESTED IN THESE ASTROGRAPHS. THEY SHOW YOUR ALIEN DOME ARRIVING.
OUR SKY CAMERAS CAPTURED THE DOME'S ION TRACE.
IT MUST HAVE HYPER JUMPED TO THIS POINT. BY PLOTTING THE STARGATES AND TIMES, IT ORIGINATED IN THE GALACTIC ARM OF ORION.
ORION? BUT THAT IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE TO WHERE THE GLEEKS SAID THEIR MAIN FORCE WAS.

STEVE BEGAN TO PIECE TOGETHER A TERRIFYING PICTURE.

WITH SOL SQUADRON ABSENT THE EARTH HAS NO DEFENCE . . . THE WHOLE THING IS A TRAP.

THE LUNAR BASE COMMANDER WAS NOT IMPRESSED BY STEVE'S THEORY.

FLIMSY EVIDENCE, MARTIN. ENTIRELY UNCONVINCING.

BUT, SIR . . . MAYBE THE GLEEK WE SCANNED HAD BEEN DELIBERATELY GIVEN WRONG INFORMATION TO PASS ON.

IT IS A REMOTE POSSIBILITY. I HAVE NO FIGHTERS TO DEPLOY. TAKE A SURVEY SHIP AND CHECK IT OUT.
I HOPE I FIND NOTHING THERE, SIR. BUT SO FAR EVERYTHING'S BEEN TOO EASY.
IF THERE IS AN INVASION FORCE NEAR ORION, IT WILL REACH EARTH BEFORE SOL SQUADRON HAS TIME TO DOUBLE BACK. I MUST HAVE A WEAPON OF SOME SORT ON THE SURVEY SHIP JUST IN CASE.

STEVE CLEARED THE SURVEY SHIP FOR TAKE OFF AND THEN MADE A LAST MINUTE VISIT TO THE SECURITY CELLS.
I CAN'T RELEASE A PRISONER WITHOUT AUTHORITY FROM THE COMMANDER.
I CAPTURED HIM . . . I WANT TO INTERROGATE HIM.

I SUPPOSE IT'S OKAY.
OF COURSE IT'S OKAY. CHECK WITH SECURITY.

STANDARD TRANSLATOR PACKS PERMITTED DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH THE GLEEK.
YOU ARE MY HOSTAGE, JUST IN CASE WE MEET UP WITH YOUR FRIENDS. I'M HOPING THEY WON'T SHOOT WHEN THEY SEE YOU ON BOARD.

MEANWHILE, THE GUARD CHECKED OUT STEVE'S AUTHORITY.

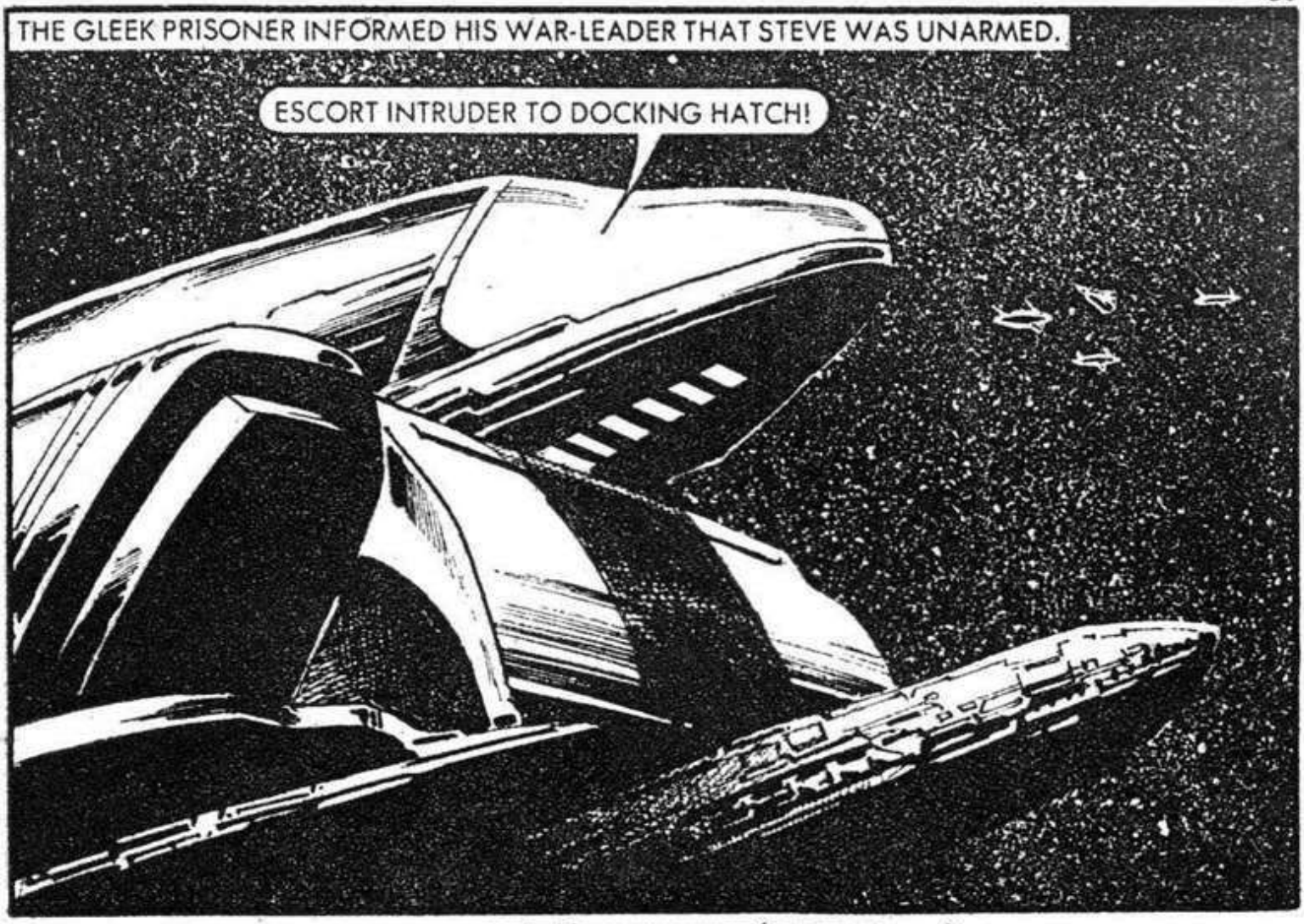
NO! OF COURSE HE DIDN'T HAVE PERMISSION TO GO JOY RIDING WITH A GLEEK. I'LL GROUND HIM FOR THIS.

AFTER SOME HOURS OF FLIGHT, THE SURVEY SHIP MATERIALISED AT ITS PRESET DESTINATION IN THE GALACTIC ARM OF ORION.
HOLY NEBULA! A GLEEK STRATOCARRIER. EARTH HAS HAD IT—A STARSTRIKE HAS STARTED.

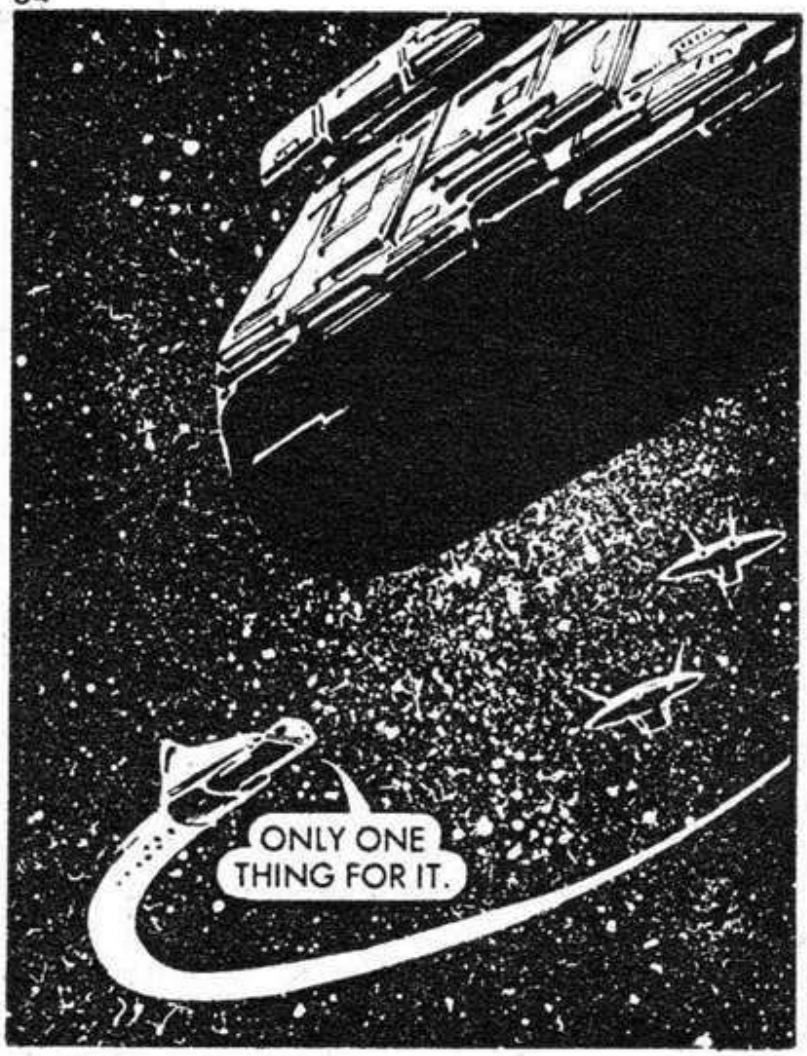
WAR-HORSE TO LUNAR BASE—I'M TRANSMITTING PICTURES TO PROVE TRICK THEORY. SOL SQUADRON SHOULD BE RECALLED AT ONCE. OVER AND OUT!

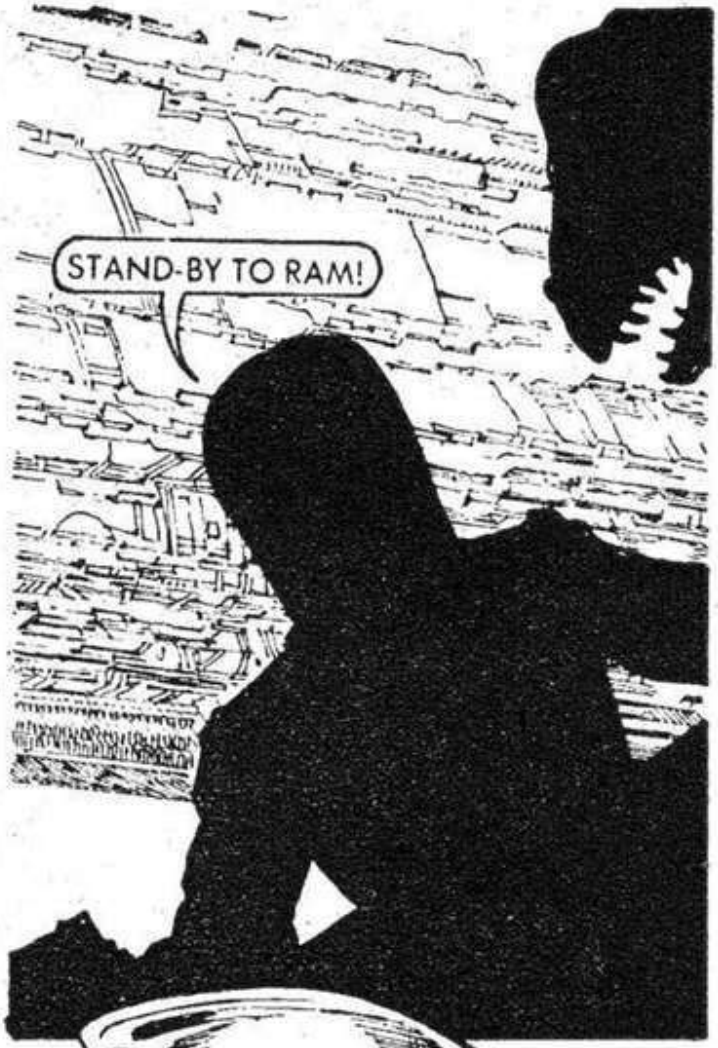
SHOW ME HOW TO GET THROUGH TO YOUR LEADER. I WANT TO TALK TERMS.
I WILL NOT CO-OPERATE, EARTHLING.

GLEEK FIGHTERS CLOSED IN ON THE SURVEY SHIP.
IF YOU DON'T CO-OPERATE, YOUR TRIGGER HAPPY FRIENDS WILL MAKE DEAD GLEEK MEAT OF YOU!
I GIVE YOU CALL SIGN.

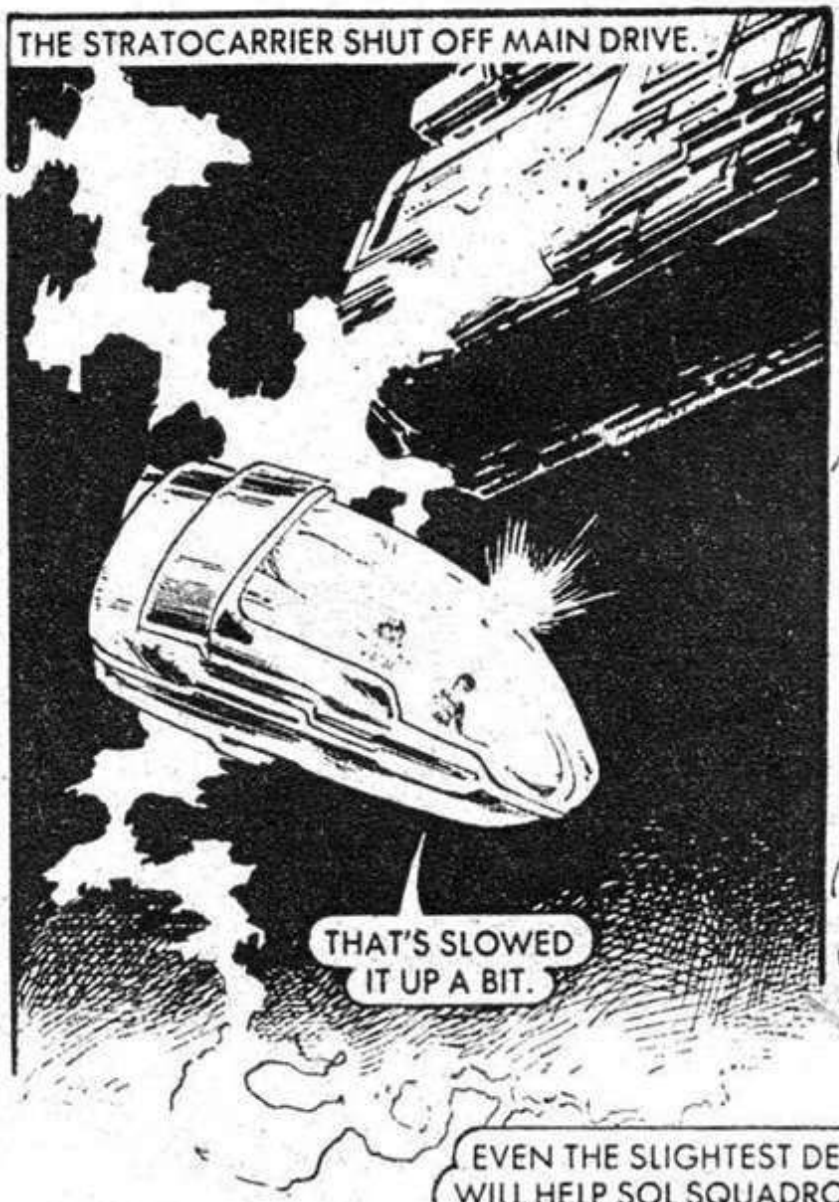

THE GLEEK PRISONER INFORMED HIS WAR-LEADER THAT STEVE WAS UNARMED.
ESCORT INTRUDER TO DOCKING HATCH!

SOMEHOW I'VE GOT TO SLOW THAT BRUTE DOWN TO GIVE SOL SQUADRON TIME TO GET BACK TO EARTH.


ONLY ONE THING FOR IT.

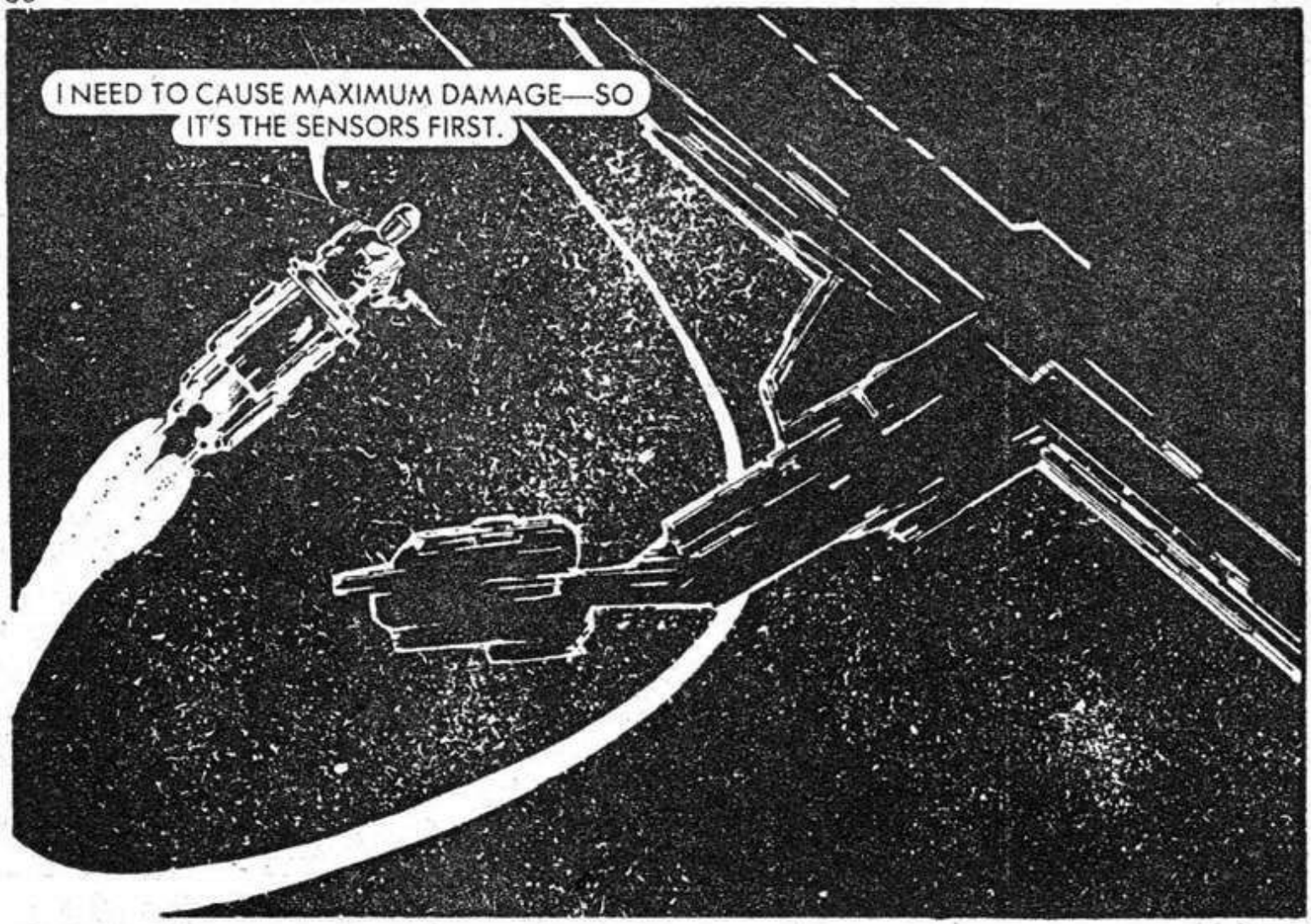

STAND-BY TO RAM!

STEVE EJECTED IN HIS ESCAPE POD AT THE LAST POSSIBLE SECOND, SENDING THE DEEP SPACE PROPULSION UNIT PLUNGING INTO THE GLEEK STRATOCARRIER'S STAR DRIVE.


THE STRATOCARRIER SHUT OFF MAIN DRIVE.
THAT'S SLOWED IT UP A BIT.

STEVE PREPARED HIS MOBILITY HARNESS.
I'M OFF TO DO MORE DAMAGE, GLEEK. YOU MIGHT BE RESCUED IF YOU KEEP QUIET . . . ONE CALL FOR HELP AND I'LL PRESS THE AUTODESTRUCT.

EVEN THE SLIGHTEST DELAY WILL HELP SOL SQUADRON IN THEIR RACE AGAINST TIME BACK TO DEFEND EARTH.


I NEED TO CAUSE MAXIMUM DAMAGE—SO IT'S THE SENSORS FIRST.

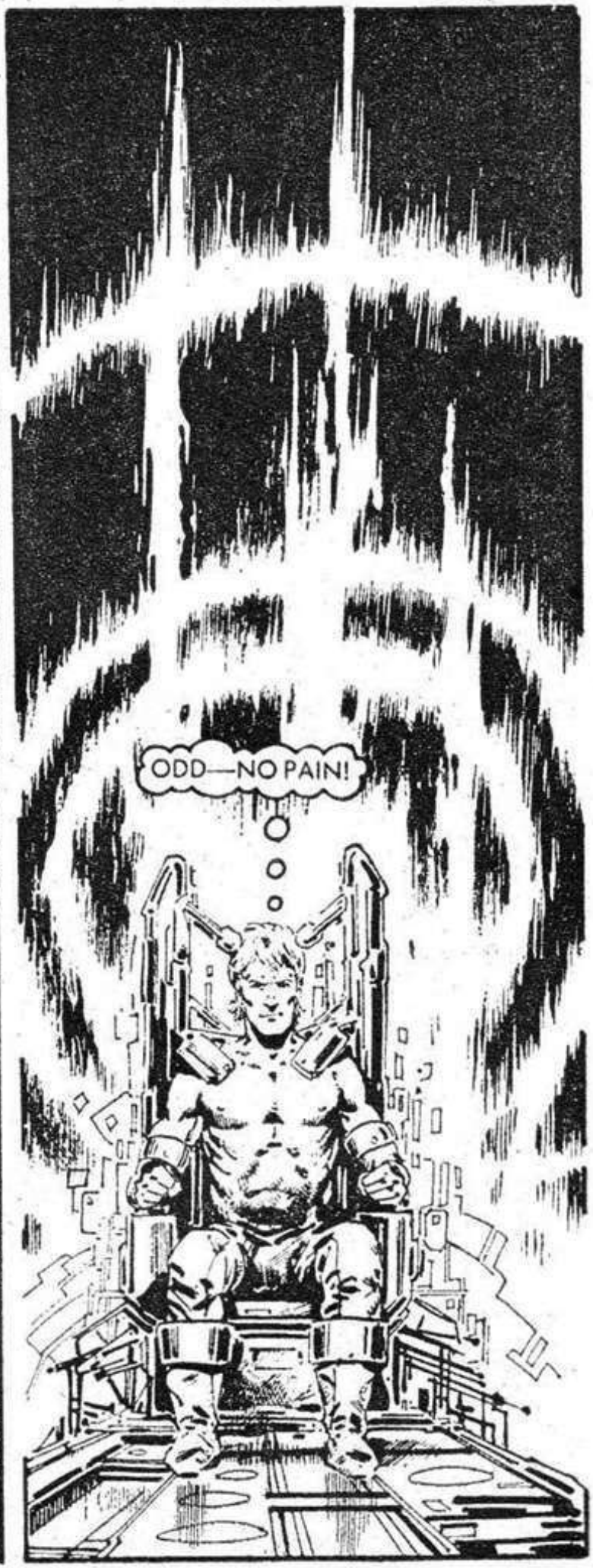
DIRECT HIT!
NOW THEY HAVE NO IDEA WHERE I AM!

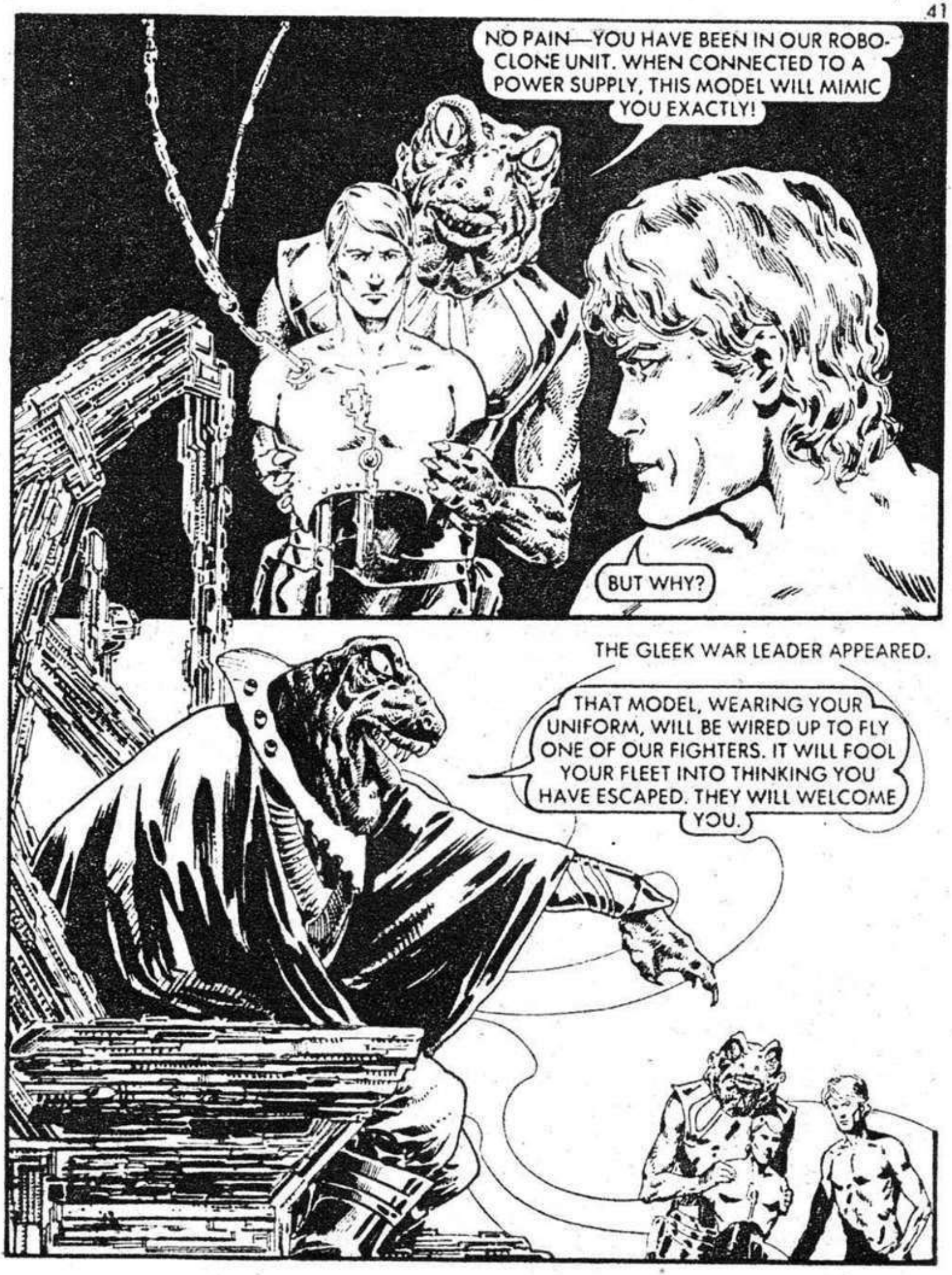
BUT A GLEEK SECURITY SQUAD HAD BEEN SENT TO DEAL WITH STEVE.
THIS LOT LOOK ABOUT AS WELCOMING AS THE CORROSIVE CLOUDS OF VENUS.

OKAY . . . I SURRENDER—FOR THE MOMENT.
STEVE WAS TAKEN PRISONER.
WE MEET AGAIN, EARTHLING. I AM TO TAKE YOU TO OUR WAR-LEADER FOR PUNISHMENT.
THIS IS THE ENEMY! I AM NOT IMPRESSED!

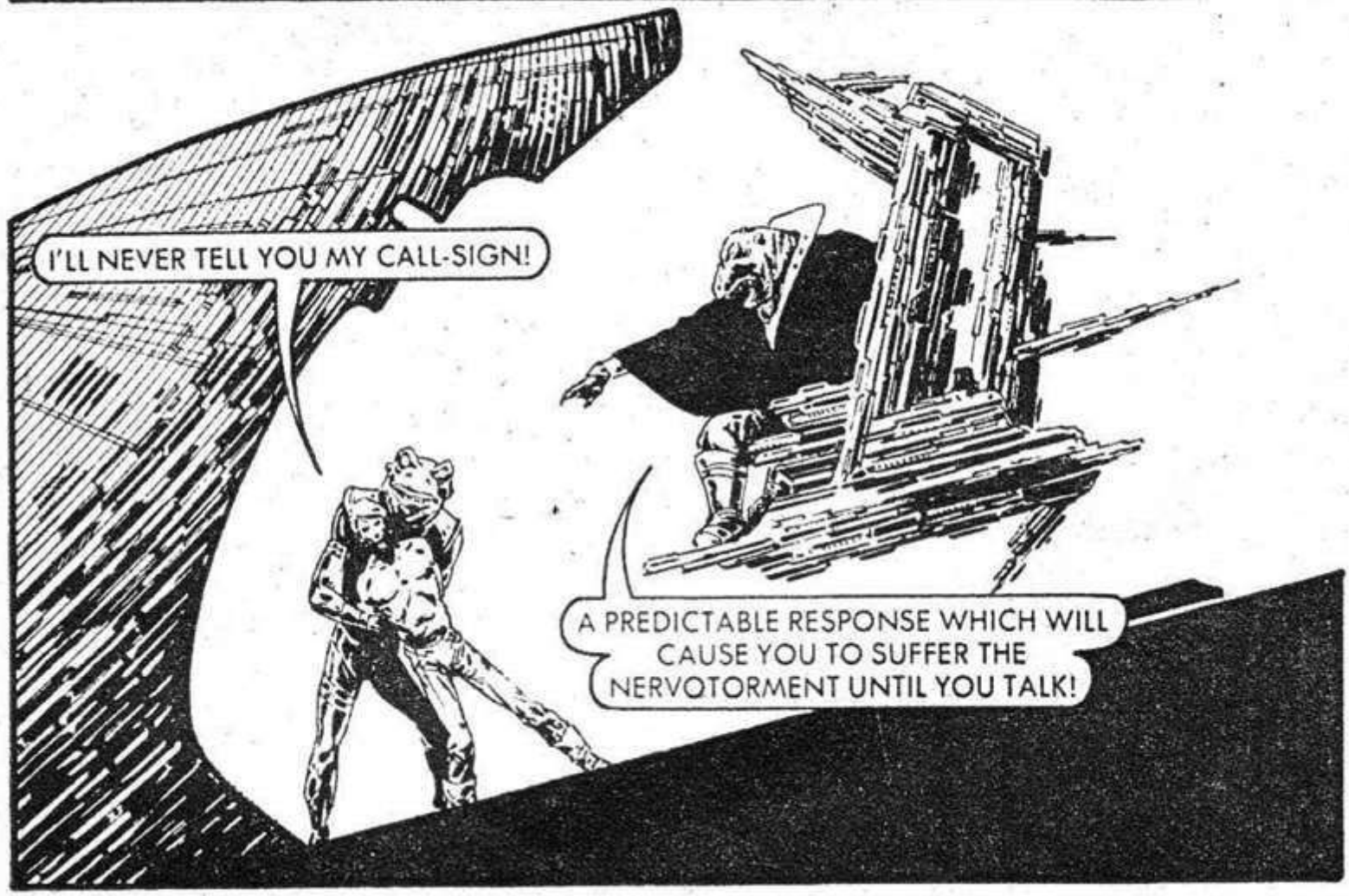
MY INVASION PLAN HAS SUFFERED DELAYS DUE TO YOUR ACTION. BUT NOW IT IS YOU WHO WILL SUFFER. MY INSTRUCTIONS OF REVENGE ARE ALREADY PREPARED!

STEVE WAS DRAGGED TO A COMPARTMENT DEEP WITHIN THE CARRIER.
THIS IS DEATH FOR YOU.


ODD—NO PAIN!


NO PAIN—YOU HAVE BEEN IN OUR ROBO-CLONE UNIT. WHEN CONNECTED TO A POWER SUPPLY, THIS MODEL WILL MIMIC YOU EXACTLY!
BUT WHY?
THE GLEEK WAR LEADER APPEARED.
THAT MODEL, WEARING YOUR UNIFORM, WILL BE WIRED UP TO FLY ONE OF OUR FIGHTERS. IT WILL FOOL YOUR FLEET INTO THINKING YOU HAVE ESCAPED. THEY WILL WELCOME YOU.

WHEN THE FIGHTER IS ALONGSIDE YOUR COMMAND SHIP, A BOMB WILL BE TRIGGERED. YOUR FLAGSHIP WILL BE OBLITERATED AND ALL YOUR COMMANDERS KILLED . . . YOUR ARMIES WILL BE IN DISARRAY AND WE SHALL WIPE YOU OUT.


I'LL NEVER TELL YOU MY CALL-SIGN!
A PREDICTABLE RESPONSE WHICH WILL CAUSE YOU TO SUFFER THE NERVOTORMENT UNTIL YOU TALK!

THIS WILL BE PAINFUL.
I CAN'T TAKE A LOT MORE OF THIS . . . BUT IF I CAN HANG ON A BIT MAYBE I CAN FOOL THEM WITH A FALSE CALL SIGN.
AN ENERGY CHARGE PULSED THROUGH STEVE'S BODY AND EVERY NERVE ENDING SENT BACK THE SAME MESSAGE—A MIND-JANGLING, SEARING AGONY.

STOP . . .
. . . THE CALL SIGN IS 720 THSM—TROJAN HORSE.
AS A REWARD FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION I WILL GIVE YOUR PUNY BODY ETERNAL EXISTENCE!
STEVE WAS DRAGGED AWAY.
I HOPE SOL SQUADRON KNOW THEIR ANCIENT STORIES OF TROY.

WHAT IS THIS?
IT IS A CRYOGENIC UNIT . . . EXAMPLES OF EVERY RACE WE'VE CONQUERED.

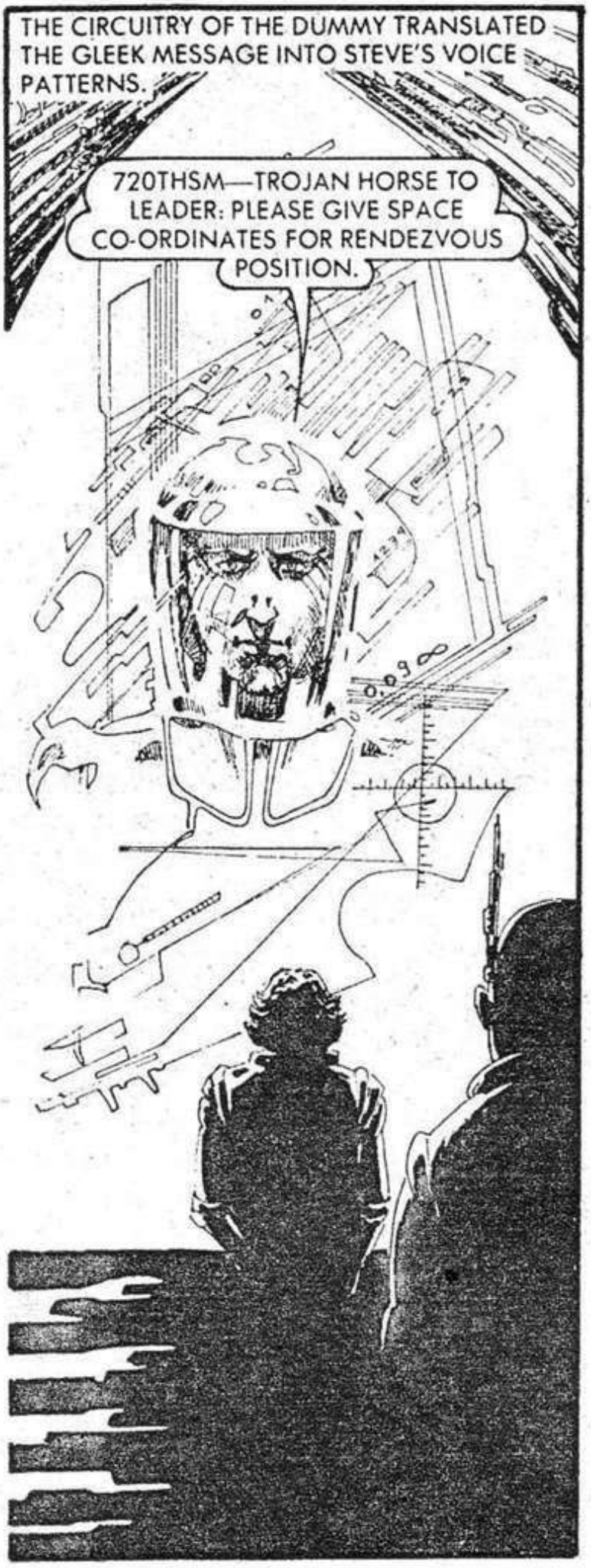
YOU WILL SOON BE ANOTHER EXAMPLE.
STEP INSIDE YOUR COFFIN, EARTHLING.
I'M NOT READY . . .

. . . AND NEITHER ARE YOU!
THE GUARDS WILL BE HERE SOON . . .
I NEED HELP. I'LL RELEASE THIS CHAP.

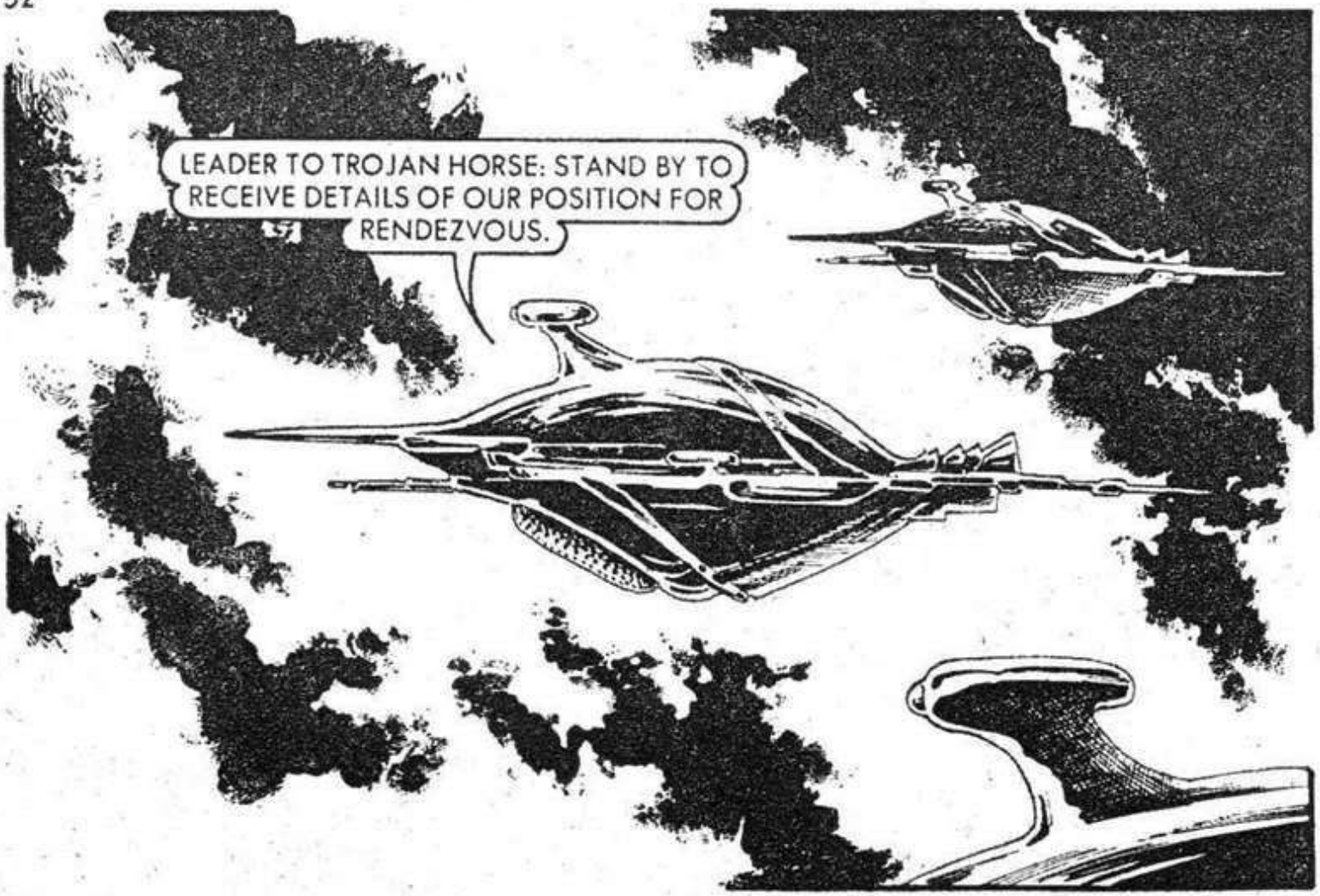
THE ALIEN PULSED WITH ENERGY.
KILL!

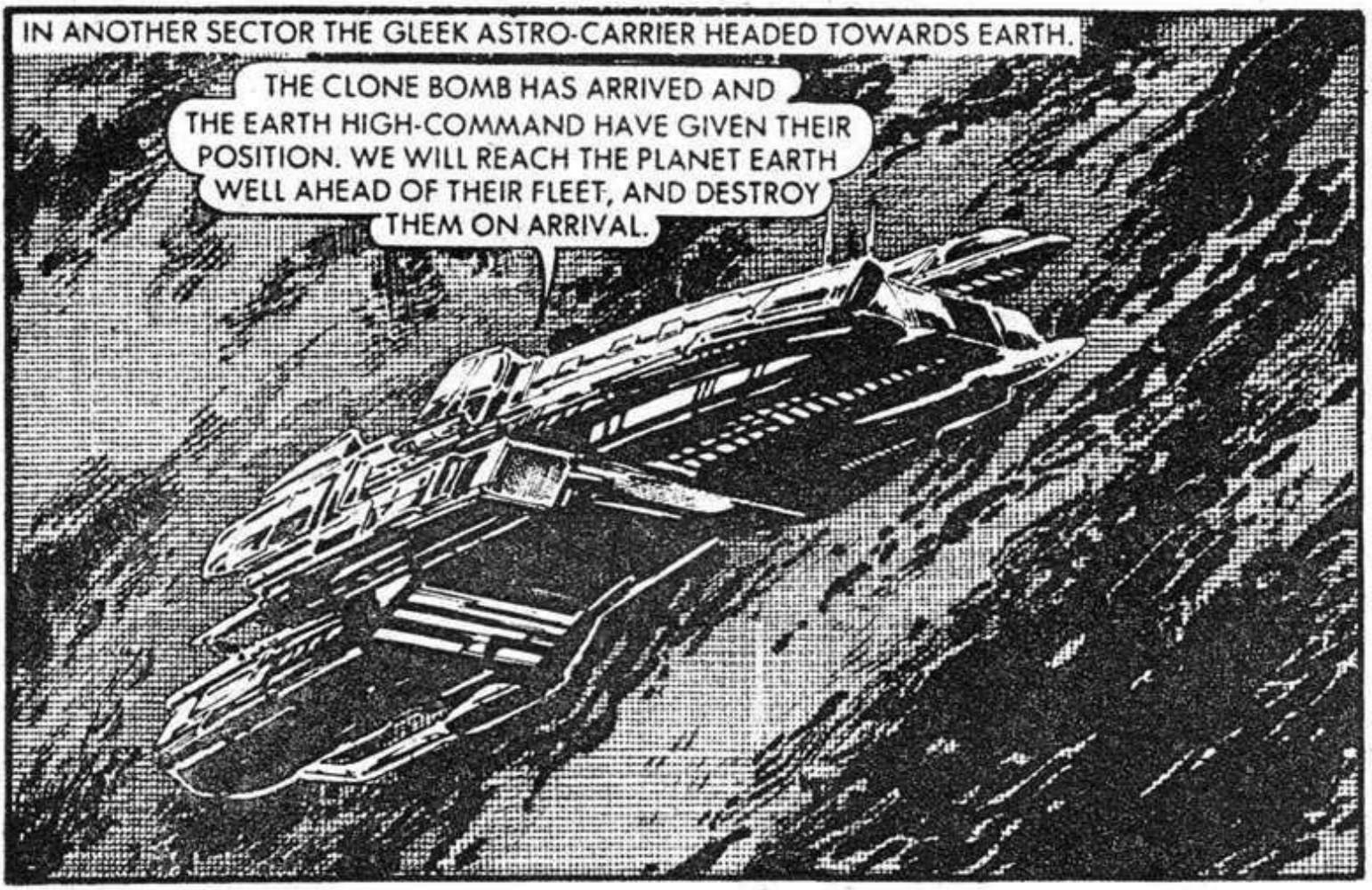
KILLED!
EASY, OLD FRIEND. THAT'S ENOUGH FOR NOW.
I AM THE LAST OF MY PEOPLE . . . THE WARRIORS OF RHEA . . . I SHALL AVENGE THEM.

WE HAVE TO FIND THEIR WAR-LEADER.
AND KILL . . . MAYBE?
IN THE GLEEK CONTROL CENTRE.
I JUST HOPE THE GLEEK WAR-LEADER HASN'T GOT INSIDE SOL'S SQUADRON'S DEFENCES AS EASILY AS I'VE GOT INSIDE HIS.
EARTH HIGH COMMAND HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED THE CALL SIGN . . . IT IS TIME TO TRANSMIT.

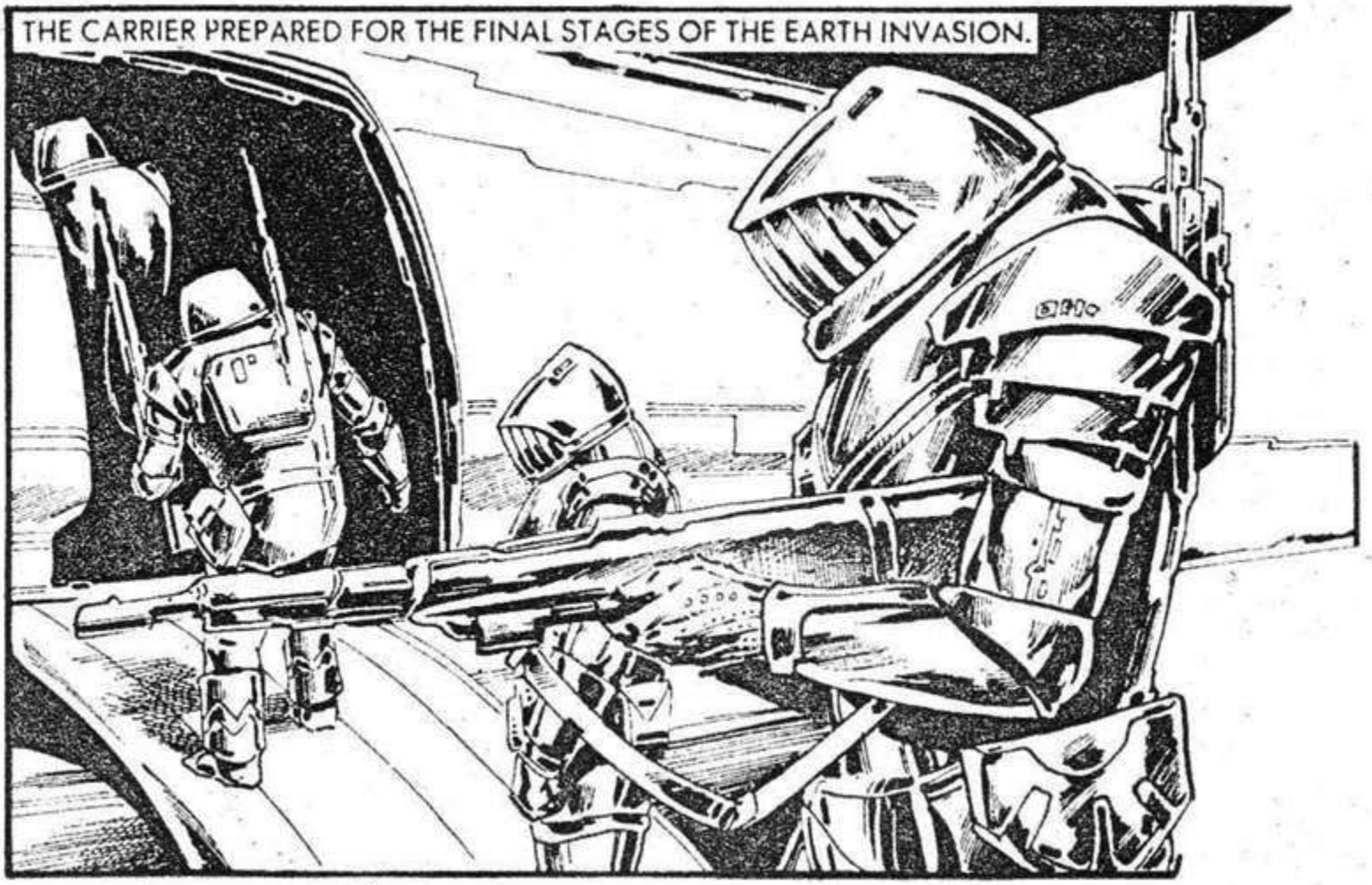

THE CIRCUITRY OF THE DUMMY TRANSLATED THE GLEEK MESSAGE INTO STEVE'S VOICE PATTERNS.
720THSM—TROJAN HORSE TO LEADER: PLEASE GIVE SPACE CO-ORDINATES FOR RENDEZVOUS POSITION.

UNITS FROM LUNAR BASE HAD JOINED WITH SOL SQUADRON AND THEIR COMMANDER WAS ON BOARD THE FLAG-SHIP.
HE MUST HAVE HI-JACKED A GLEEK FIGHTER.
TROJAN HORSE? I'M NOT TOO SURE, SIR.

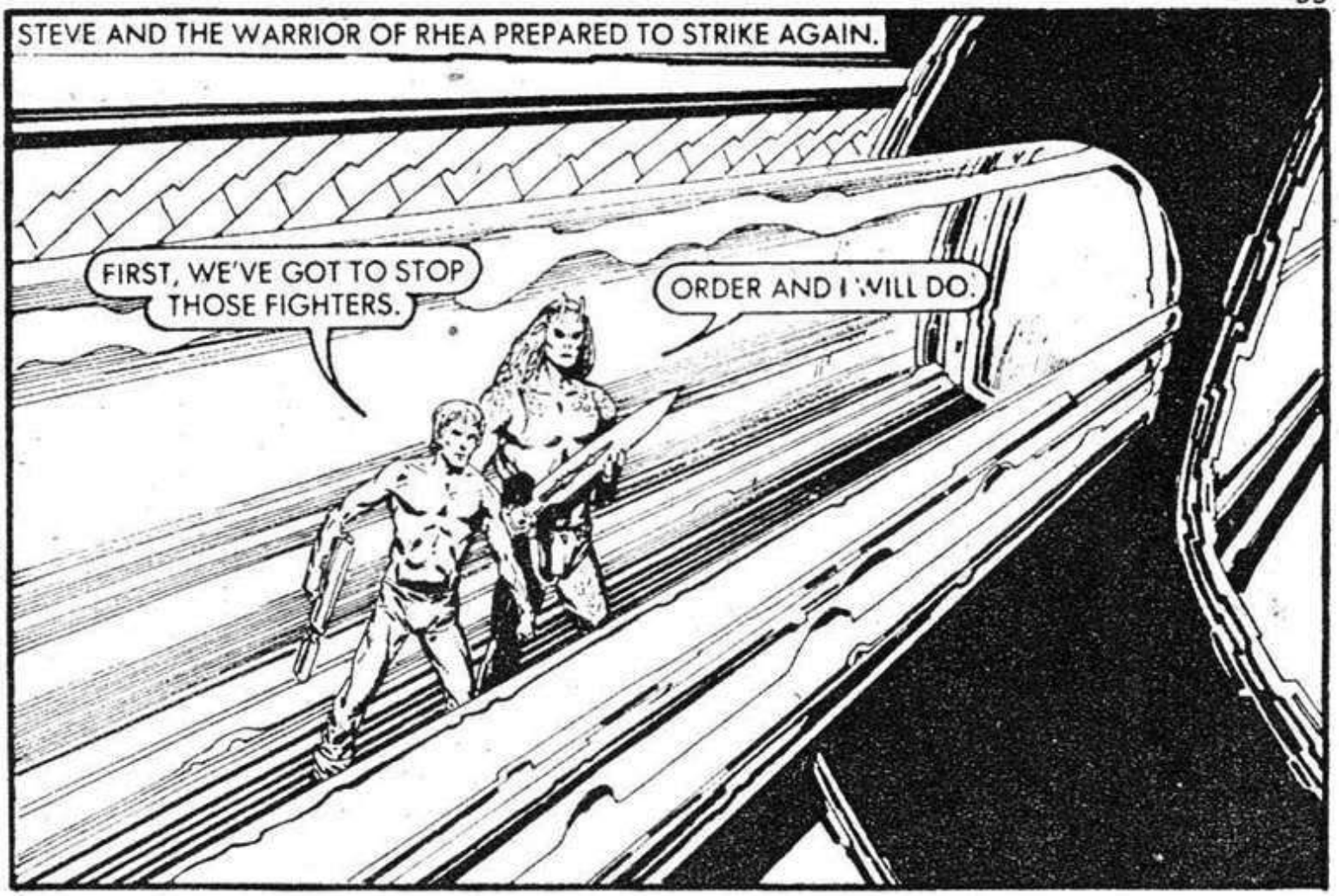

LEADER TO TROJAN HORSE: STAND BY TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF OUR POSITION FOR RENDEZVOUS.


IN ANOTHER SECTOR THE GLEEK ASTRO-CARRIER HEADED TOWARDS EARTH.
THE CLONE BOMB HAS ARRIVED AND THE EARTH HIGH-COMMAND HAVE GIVEN THEIR POSITION. WE WILL REACH THE PLANET EARTH WELL AHEAD OF THEIR FLEET, AND DESTROY THEM ON ARRIVAL.

DESPITE THE DAMAGE TO OUR DRIVE, WE WILL ENTER THE BATTLE ZONE AHEAD OF THE EARTH FLEET. PREPARE TO LAUNCH OUR FIGHTERS.

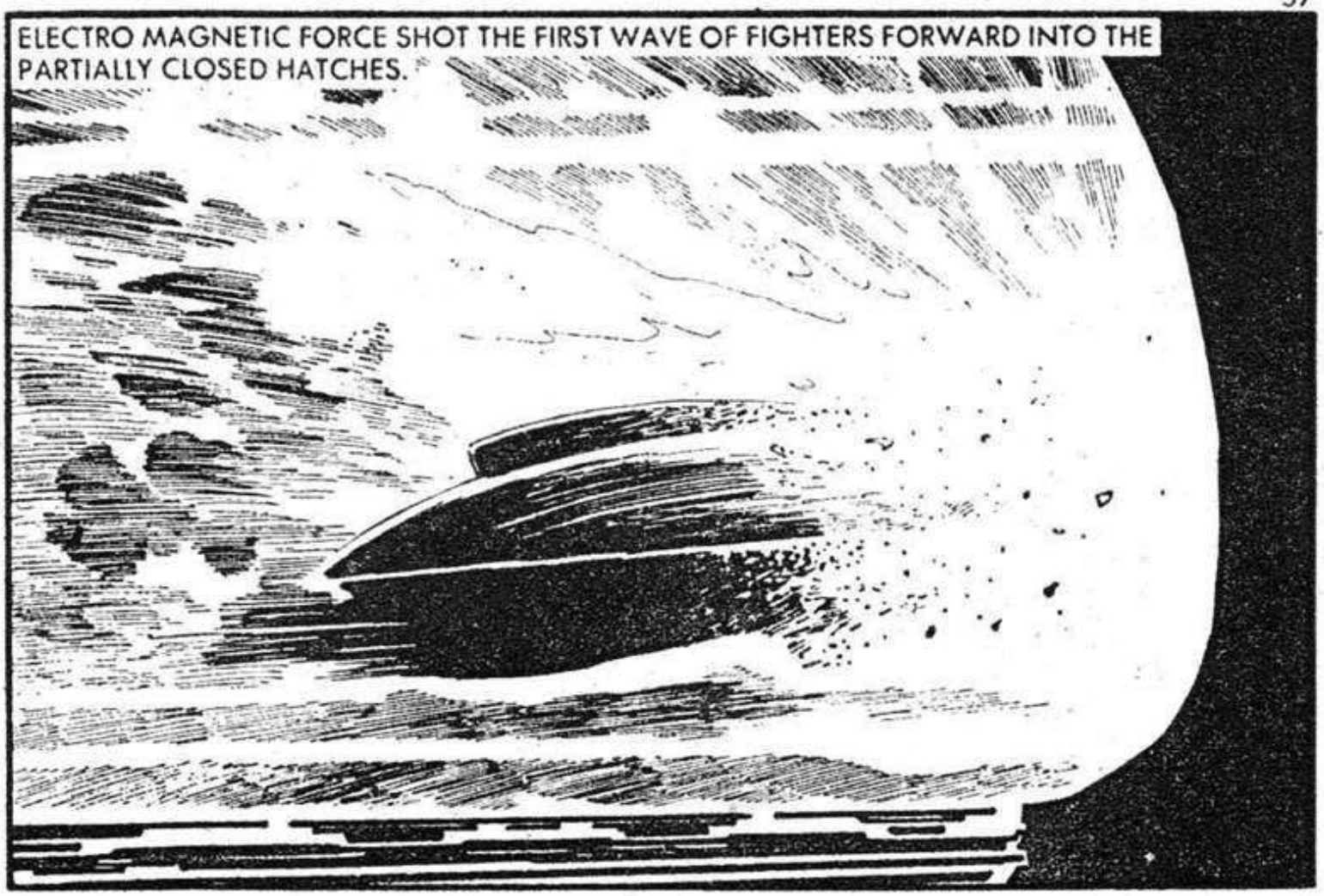

THE CARRIER PREPARED FOR THE FINAL STAGES OF THE EARTH INVASION.

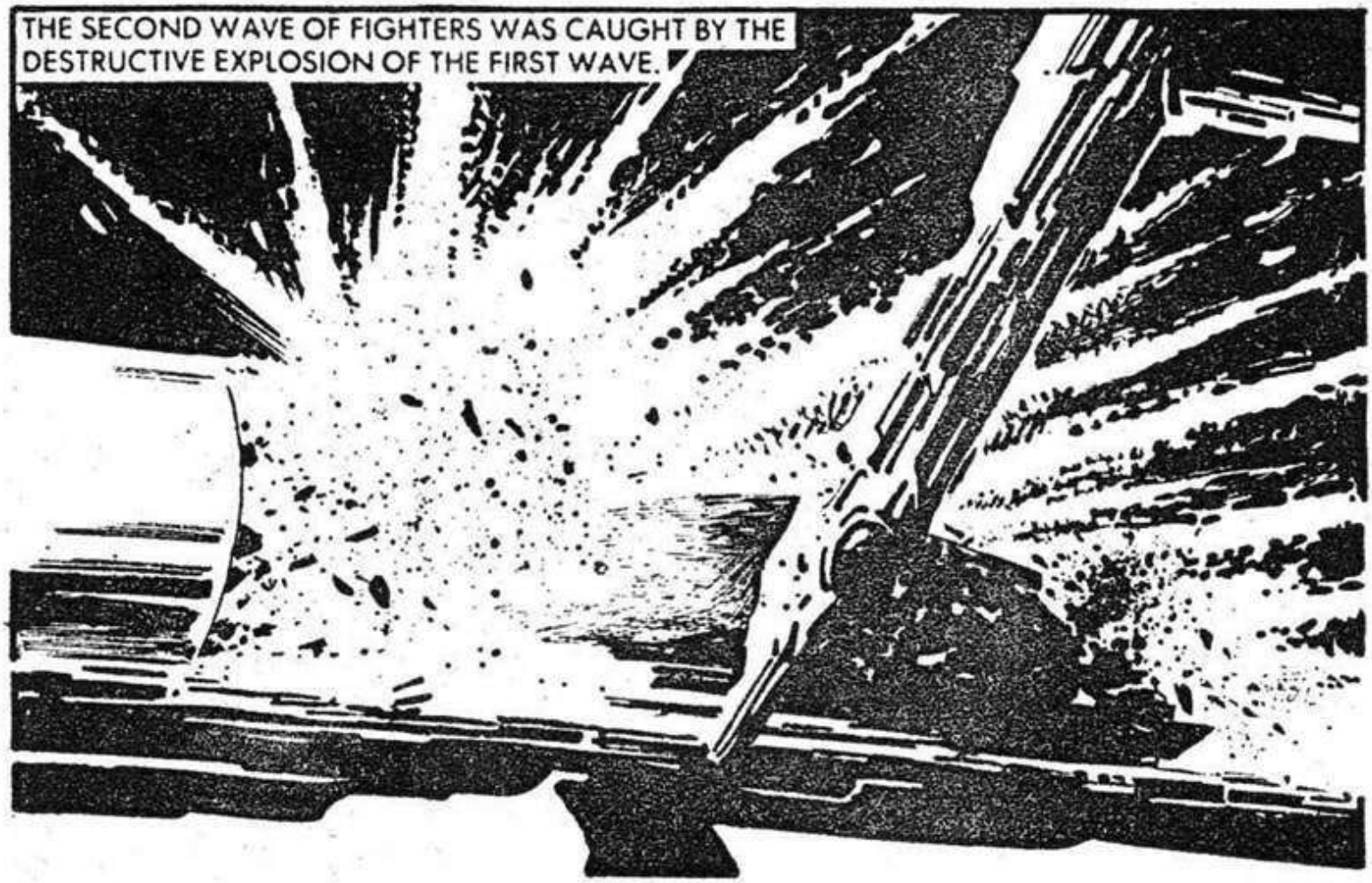
THE LAUNCH TUBES WERE PRIMED WITH FIGHTERS.
FIRST WAVE ENTER LAUNCH TUBES NOW!
AN ELECTRO-MAGNETIC FORCE FIELD BUILT UP TO SHOOT THE FIGHTERS FROM THE TUBES AT HYPER SPEED.
FIGHTERS READY!
COMMENCE COUNT-DOWN!


STEVE AND THE WARRIOR OF RHEA PREPARED TO STRIKE AGAIN.
FIRST, WE'VE GOT TO STOP THOSE FIGHTERS.
ORDER AND I WILL DO.

DIE, GLEEKS!
I MUST GET THE FIGHTERS AWAY.

YOU'RE TOO LATE TO STOP US NOW!
MAYBE NOT!
CONTROL HAS COMMITTED US TO LAUNCH!
NO, THE HATCH CLOSES!
STEVE HAD OPERATED THE HATCH CONTROL.


ELECTRO MAGNETIC FORCE SHOT THE FIRST WAVE OF FIGHTERS FORWARD INTO THE PARTIALLY CLOSED HATCHES.


THE SECOND WAVE OF FIGHTERS WAS CAUGHT BY THE DESTRUCTIVE EXPLOSION OF THE FIRST WAVE.

THERE WAS ENOUGH OXYGEN IN THE HANGAR TO SUPPORT COMBUSTION AND FIRE SPREAD.
ABANDON HANGAR BEFORE IT BLOWS!
MEANWHILE STEVE AND RHEA HAD BEEN CORNERED.
WE TAKE YOU TO OUR WAR-LEADER.
AT LEAST WE STOPPED THE FIGHTERS.

IN CENTRAL CONTROL, THE WAR-LEADER HAD YET TO LEARN OF THE DISASTER TO HIS FIGHTER FORCE.
MY FORCE BEAMS WILL RAVAGE THE PLANET UNTIL THERE IS NOTHING LEFT ALIVE.

LEADER! THE CLONE BOMB OF THE EARTHLING HAS REACHED RENDEZVOUS POINT—THERE IS NOTHING THERE.
THEN WHERE IS THE EARTH BATTLE FLEET?

EARTH FLEET IS HERE! WHERE ARE MY FIGHTERS?

LEADER! THERE ARE REPORTS OF AN ACCIDENT IN THE LAUNCH TUBES!

SOL SQUADRON OPENED FIRE ON THE COMMAND VESSEL.
LEADER! WE HAVE CAUGHT THE SABOTEURS! WILL WE KILL THEM?
NO...
SOMETHING MUST BE WRONG, THEY'RE NOT FIGHTING BACK!
...IT IS OVER! WE HAVE BEEN BEATEN BY A SUPERIOR FORCE.

CALL OFF YOUR BATTLE FLEET, EARTHLING.
720THSM, WAR-HORSE, REPEAT, WAR-HORSE CALLING HIGH COMMAND. COME IN PLEASE.

THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF SOL SQUADRON DIRECTED THE CLOSING STAGES OF THE BATTLE IN SPACE.

IT'S A GENUINE TRANSMISSION, SIR.
ONCE THE SURRENDER HAD BEEN ACCEPTED.
MESSAGE RECEIVED WAR-HORSE, WE'LL SEND A BOARDING PARTY TO ACCEPT THE SURRENDER.
I MADE THAT TROJAN HORSE CALL SIGN DELIBERATELY—I HOPED YOU WOULD REALISE SOMETHING WAS UP.
INDEED I DID, MARTIN . . . THE COMMANDER FINALLY AGREED WHEN I POINTED OUT SOMETHING. . .
. . . YES, INDEED. WE KNEW THE BROADCAST WAS FALSE — BECAUSE THE STEVE MARTIN ON THE VIDSCREEN HAD ITS COLLAR DONE UP . . . FAR TOO TIDY FOR YOU!
GIVE THE ORDER AND I KILL FOR YOU!
HE OWES ME A FAVOUR . . . AND HE'S A TRIFLE BLOODTHIRSTY.

A FEW PERIODS LATER, THE PRISONERS THAT THE GLEEKS HAD HELD IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION WERE RELEASED AND RETURNED TO THEIR HOME WORLDS. THE GLEEKS THEMSELVES WERE DISARMED AND ABSORBED INTO THE GALACTIC FEDERATION.
MESSAGE FROM HIGH COMMAND JUST THROUGH, MARTIN. YOU AND THAT BLOODTHIRSTY RHEA HAVE BEEN POSTED TO THE MAGELLANIC CLUSTER. THERE'S A WAR ON. YOU WILL BE IN COMMAND OF 'A' FLIGHT, SOL SQUADRON.

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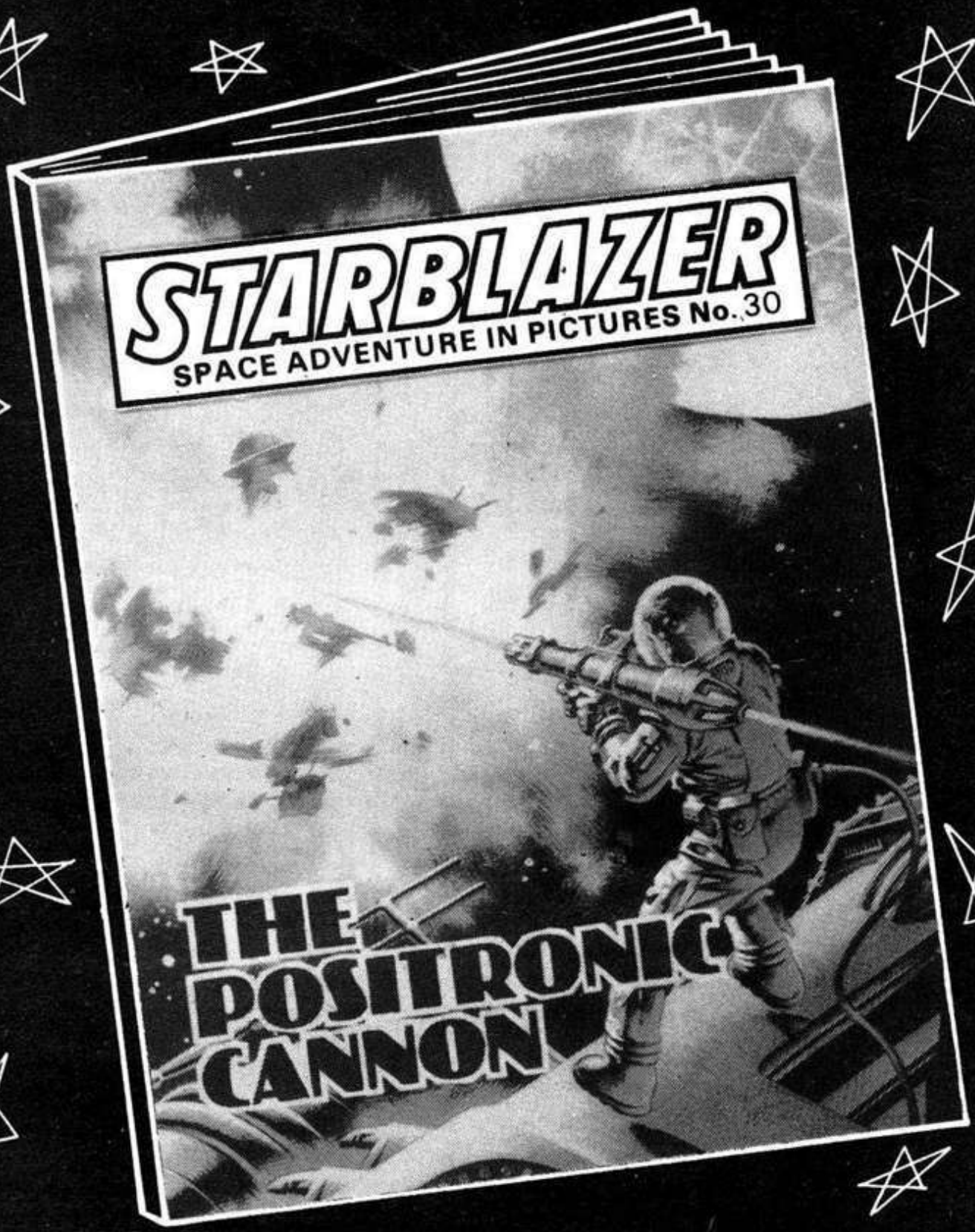
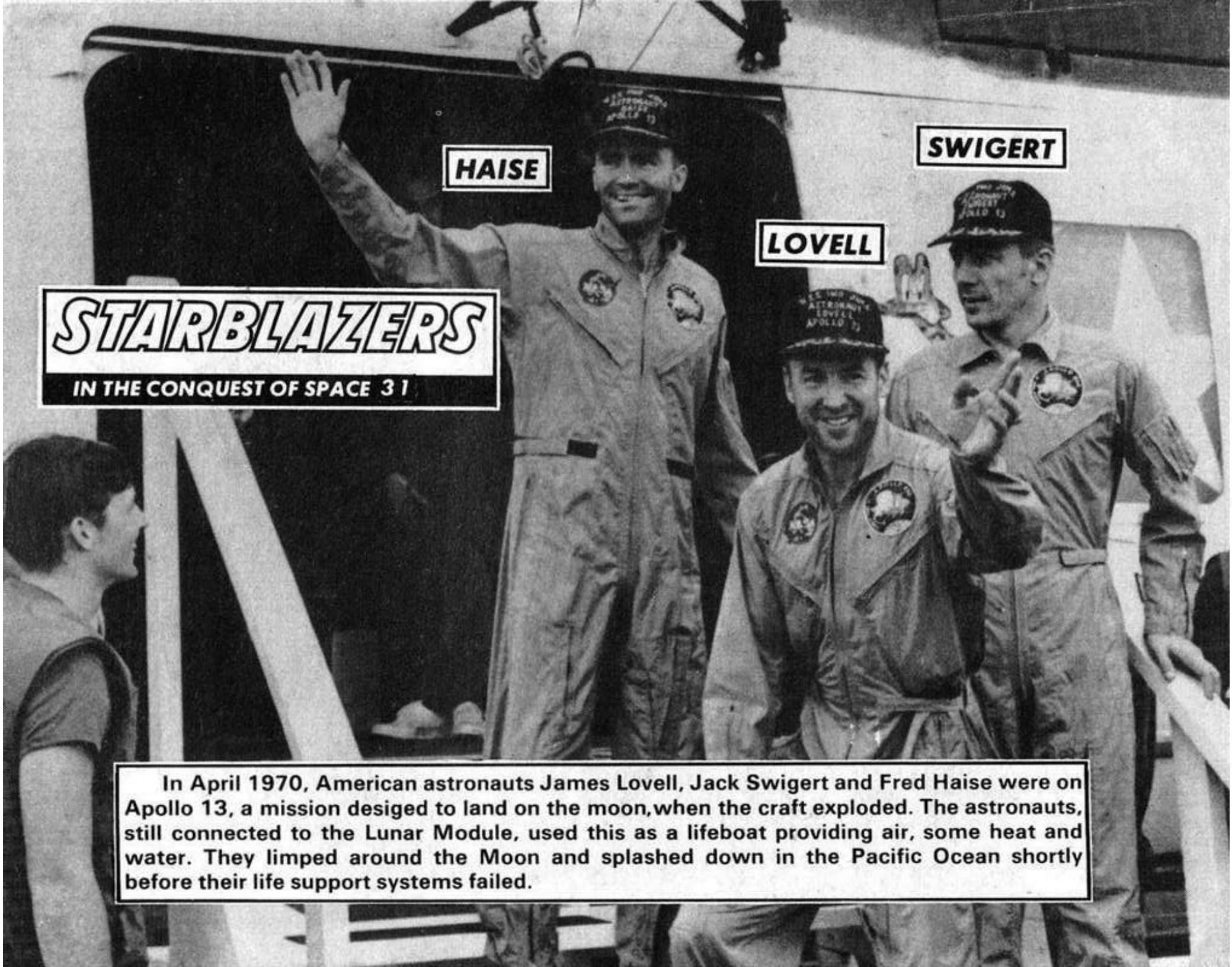
IT'S OUT OF THIS WORLD



THIS MONTH'S OTHER ACTION-PACKED STORY—NOW ON SALE



STARBLAZERS

IN THE CONQUEST OF SPACE 31

In April 1970, American astronauts James Lovell, Jack Swigert and Fred Haise were on Apollo 13, a mission desiged to land on the moon,when the craft exploded. The astronauts, still connected to the Lunar Module, used this as a lifeboat providing air, some heat and water. They limped around the Moon and splashed down in the Pacific Ocean shortly before their life support systems failed.